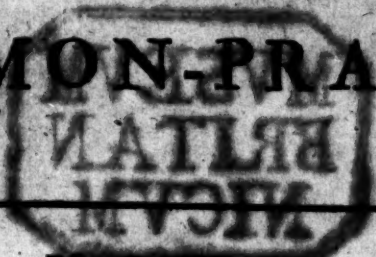


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Mr. *H O L E*'s  
DISCOURSES

ON THE  
COMMON-PRA YER.



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VOL. I.

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*The Reverend*  
MATTHEW HOLE, D.D.

12  
PRACTICAL  
DISCOURSES

On All the  
PARTS and OFFICES  
OF THE  
LITURGY  
OF THE  
Church of *England*.

Wherein are laid open the HARMONY,  
EXCELLENCY, and USEFULNESS of  
its Composition.

3 L e

In FOUR VOLUMES.

Useful for all FAMILIES.

VOLUME the FIRST.

By MATTHEW HOLE, B. D.  
Prebendary of the Church of *Wells*, and Vicar of  
*Stokegurfy* in *Somersetshire*.

1 Cor. XIV. 12. latter part.

*Seek that ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church.*

LONDON, Printed by J. D. for W. TAYLOR at the Ship  
in *Paternoster-Row*, and H. CLEMENTS at the Half-Moon in  
*St. Paul's Churchyard*. M.DCC.XIV.

18



DISCOURSES

ON ALL THE  
PARTS and OFFICES  
OF THE

CHRISTIAN



WHICH ARE THE FIRST OF THE  
SERIES OF DISCOURSES  
ON THE

OF THE

OF THE

VOLUME THE FIRST

BY MATTHEW HOLE, B.D.

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AND  
OF THE

OF THE

PRINTED BY J. D. FOR W. TAYLOR IN THE  
STREET, AND H. CLAYTON IN THE HALL-MOOR  
STREET, CHANCERY, M.DCCXIV.



TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

**J O H N**

**Lord Bishop of London,**

AND

**One of Her Majesty's most  
Honourable Privy Council.**

**MY LORD!**

**I** HAVE taken the Bold-  
ness to borrow some  
Lustre to the following  
Discourses, by Dedicating them



vi *The* DEDICATION.  
to YOUR LORDSHIP; as a  
Patron, able at once to adorn the  
Work, and to protect the Au-  
thor : humbly beseeching Your  
Candid Acceptance of this small  
Offering, as the Earnest or First-  
Fruits of a greater Harvest.

The Subject Matter of them,  
being the devout and solemn  
Prayers of the Church, they fit-  
ly address to One in so high a  
Station in it, who is both an emi-  
nent Example, and great Encou-  
rager of our daily Devotion.

YOUR LORDSHIP'S wise  
Counsel and Conduct having so  
happily influenc'd the Affairs of  
Princes, as to procure for us an  
Honourable Peace Abroad; it is

*The* DEDICATION. VII

to be hop'd, that the same Prudence and Piety may have the like Influence upon the Minds of the People, to compose the Differences, and compass a happy Peace and Union at Home.

To effect this great and good End, it may perhaps be of some use to convince them of the admirable Frame and Order of our publick Liturgy, and to bring them in love with the pious and well-compos'd Prayers prescrib'd in it.

This is the main Drift and Design of the ensuing Discourses, on so excellent and useful a Subject, which are humbly submitted to YOUR LORDSHIP'S Can-



viii *The* DEDICATION  
dour and better Judgment; ho-  
ping they may, in some measure,  
attain the desir'd Effect, under  
the Care and Conduct of Your  
Auspicious Government.

But I shall not presume to pre-  
scribe to YOUR LORDSHIP'S  
greater Wisdom and deeper In-  
sight into these Matters; but  
heartily pray for a Blessing upon  
Your prudent Counsels, and pious  
Undertakings to these Purposes.

May YOUR LORDSHIP long  
continue to be a Blessing and Or-  
nament to these Kingdoms, to be  
a Pillar to the Church, a Protec-  
tor to the Clergy, and a Prop to  
your Country. May you be still  
furnish'd with Gifts and Graces,  
fitted

**The DEDICATION.** ix  
fitted to adorn your High Station  
here upon Earth; till you shall  
be translated to a Higher Dig-  
nity, and shine with a brighter  
Lustre in the Kingdom of Hea-  
ven: which is the hearty Wish  
and Prayer of,

P R E F A C E

MY LORD,

*Your Lordship's*



*Most humbly Devoted Servant,*

Matthew Hole.

IX NOTATION (X)  
fired to adorn your High Station  
The Reader is here presented with  
a Practical Explication of the se-  
veral Parts and Offices of our pub-  
lick Liturgy: A Work attempted,  
and well-performed in different Ways and Me-  
thods, by many Pious and Eminent Divines of  
our own Church; and above all, by the Reve-  
rend and Learned Dr. COMBER; whose Ela-  
borate Writings on this Subject justly deserve  
immortal Praise: which I think my self obliged  
to acknowledg, having received no small Light  
and Assistance from them in the following Work.  
However,

# P R E F A C E.



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and Assistance from them in the following Work.  
However,



## The PREFACE.

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I have again ventur'd on the same Task, in a Way and Method different from all that have gone before me; by reducing the Substance of each Part into several Short and Practical Discourses: And whereas the fore-cited Author adapted his Writings more to the Understandings of learned than vulgar Readers; I have endeavour'd to make them of more general and universal Use, by bringing them down to the Capacities of the meanest Persons: to whose Understandings I have labour'd, both for Matter and Style, to accommodate them.

I shall not now need to insist upon the Excellency and Usefulness of our Establish'd Liturgy, which far exceeds all the Liturgies of former or later Times; having all the Beauties, and being refin'd from the Errors and Imperfections of them all.

These Divine Forms have born down the Extemporary Effusions of Sectaries and Gifted Brethren, and baffled all the Opposition of Enthusiasts and Innovators, together with all the other Arts and Devices of Deceivers. So that they now shine with their own bright and conquering Lustre; and all Attempts made against them

them plainly appear to proceed either from Ignorance or Design, and not from any sound Principles of Knowledge and Conscience. For 'tis now evident, that we can better pray with the Spirit in the Use of these well-composed Forms, than they who vainly pretend to it without them; and all good Christians may hereby better sing and praise GOD with Understanding and Truth, than seduced Persons with all their idle Boasts of Knowledge and Inspiration.

But to give the Reader some general and brief Account of this Work; it will consist of Four Volumes;

The First, containing the several Parts of the Morning and Evening Prayer, together with the Creed of St. Athanasius.

The Second, The Invocations, Supplications, and Intercessions of our Excellent and Comprehensive Litany.

The Third, The Occasional Prayers and Thanksgivings that follow after it.

The Fourth, The Collects, Epistles, and Gospels for the whole Year.

In

# The PREFACE.

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In all which, I have study'd all possible Clearness and convenient Brevity; that I might neither tire the Patient, nor drain the Purses of the Courteous Readers.

If any shall find their Notions in these Matters more clear'd up, or their Devotion better assisted by any thing deliver'd in them, let them give God the Praise, and the Author their Prayers.

Farewel.



THE





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 to*

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\*\*\*\*\*

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PRACTICAL  
DISCOURSES

On All the PARTS of

*Morning and Evening Prayer*

Prescribed in the

LITURGY

OF THE

CHURCH of ENGLAND.

To which is Added,

A DISCOURSE on the CREED of  
St. ATHANASIUS.

---

By MATTHEW HOLE, B. D.  
Prebendary of the Church of Wells, and  
Vicar of Stokegursy in Somersetshire.

---

1 Cor. XIV. 12. latter part.  
*Seek that ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church.*

---

L O N D O N,

Printed in the Year M. DCC. XIV.



DISCOURSES  
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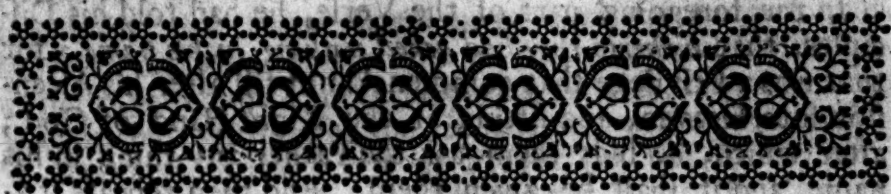
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See that ye may excel in the Edifying of the Church.  
1 Cor. XIV. 12. latter part.

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LONDON

Printed in the Year MDCCLXIV.



*On the* SENTENCES *that begin*  
the LITURGY.

DISCOURSE I.

St. JOHN XVI. 24. *latter part.*

*Ask, and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full.*



BEFORE I enter upon the Explanation of the publick Liturgy or Common-Prayer, so call'd, because 'tis common to all the People, and utter'd by the common Voice and Consent of the whole Church; it will be requisite to premise something by way of Introduction, touching the Duty of Prayer: which is the most excellent, the most necessary, and the most beneficial Act of Religion. For as it relates to God, 'tis an Acknowledgment of all his infinite and adorable Attributes and Perfections; and so the best way we have of celebrating his Praise and Glory.

As it relates to our selves, 'tis an Acknowledgment of our daily Wants and Necessities, together with our great Unworthiness and utter Inability to supply them our selves; and so is the best way of expressing our Duty and Dependence upon him. And,

Therefore to encourage and direct us in the due offering up our Prayers, I shall endeavour to shew the Nature, the Success, and the Design of this Divine Duty; and that from

#### 4 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON

these words of our Blessed Saviour, *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full.*

In the foregoing part of the Verse, he had told his Disciples, that *hitherto they had asked nothing in his name*; for that was a Privilege that commenc'd not till after his Ascension into Heaven, and sitting at the Right Hand of God; after which, he bids them ask the Father any thing in his name, and it shall be given them. And then repeats it again, *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full.* Where we may observe,

I. A Precept, *Ask.*

II. A Promise, *And ye shall receive.* And;

III. The End and Design of both, *That your Joy may be full.*

I shall speak something particularly to each of these, and begin,

I. With the Precept, in the word *Ask*; which is a Command for the Duty of Prayer, that being variously express'd in Holy Scripture: for 'tis stiled sometimes a *seeking unto God*, a *calling upon him*, a *crying to him*, a *knocking at the Gates of Heaven*, a *making our Request known unto him*, and the like: and here 'tis express'd, as it often is elsewhere, by *Asking*; which represents us as humble Suitors and Supplicants at the Throne of Grace, to find Grace and Mercy to help in time of need. Now for the Nature of Prayer, it may be thus defin'd: 'Tis a pious Address or Application of the Heart and Soul unto God, with a due Sense of the Divine Majesty, and a humble Dependence upon him for the Supply of all our Wants. Where I stile it,

*1<sup>st</sup>*, An Address or Application of the Soul unto God, to shew that Prayer is not a business of the Tongue, as some would have it; or a matter of Words, as too many make it, who put themselves and others upon the daily study and invention of new Words for the same things; which God neither expects, nor is any way delighted with, for he is not to be inform'd by any words, nor to be persuaded by many, nor to be pleas'd with new. These things may do much with Men, who are wont to be wrought upon this way; but they have no force or efficacy at all with God, who hears the silent Language of the Heart, and answers the secret Sighs and Breathings of a devout Soul. Hannah *prayed in her Heart, when her Voice was not heard*; and her mental Prayer was better accepted and answer'd, than all the Vows and



and Sacrifices of *Elkanah*. Our Saviour blamed the *Heathens* for *thinking to be heard for their much speaking*; and condemn'd the *Pharisees* for their *long Prayers*. The Wise-man wills, that in our *Petitions* to God our words should be few; and the *Apostle* tells us, that the *Spirit's* assisting us in Prayer consists not in supplying us with many and new Words, but with *Sighs* and *Groans* that cannot be utter'd. So that the *Life* and *Spirit* of Prayer lies not in the outward Motion of the *Tongue*, but in the inward *Breathings* and *Longings* of the *Heart*; 'tis no verbal thing, but a spiritual Application of the *Soul* unto God.

2dly, I say, that Prayer must be accompany'd with a due Sense of the *Divine Majesty*; that is, with an Apprehension of his glorious and adorable *Attributes*, and our infinite Distance from him, with an *Awe* of his *Greatness*, and a Sense of our own *Vileness*. Hence we find *Moses* declaring him to be a *God glorious in Holiness, fearful in Praises, doing Wonders*; and that *there was none like unto him*, *Exod. 15. 11.* *Abraham*, in comparison with him, owns himself to be but *Dust and Ashes*; and *David*, to be a *Worm, and no Man*: signifying, that we are to represent God in our Minds, as one *deck'd with Majesty and Honour*; and our selves, in our best estate to be *altogether Vanity*. And this will help to make us *serve the Lord with fear, and even to rejoice before him with trembling*: which is the best Disposition we can shew in all our *Addresses* to him.

3dly, 'Tis added, that our Applications to God in Prayer are to be attended with a humble Dependence upon him for the Supply of all our Wants. To which end, we are to come to him with a deep Sense of our *Necessities*, and our own *Inability* to help our selves; as also with a firm Reliance upon his infinite *Power*, and *Ability* to give more than we can ask or think, and his infinite *Readiness* to grant what is fit and convenient for us. To make this effectual, we are farther to address the *Divine Majesty* with a grateful Sense and Acknowledgment of the *Mercies* we have already receiv'd; and that will both engage and encourage him to give, and us to expect more, as our *Needs* shall require. These things are the necessary *Ingredients* and *Concomitants* of an acceptable Prayer, which we see is not so much a work of the *Head*, as of the *Heart*; and therefore *St. Austin* calls it, the lifting up of the *Mind*, and the pouring out of the *Soul* unto God. And *Isidore* makes it an *Affection* of the *Heart*, not a *Labour* of the

## 6 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON

Lips; consisting not so much in the outward Sound or Voice of words, as in the inward Cries and Groans of the Soul. This is briefly the Nature of Prayer, contain'd in the Precept of the Text, *Ask: From whence I proceed,*

II. To the Promise annex'd to it, in those words, *Ask, and ye shall receive.* And this will bring me to consider the wonderful Efficacy and Success of hearty Prayer, which hath an invincible Power, and nothing is able to resist it. In the Old Testament we read of many great and strange things done by it. *Jacob* wrestled with God by Prayer, and prevail'd for the Blessing. *Moses's* Prayer dry'd up the Waters of the Red Sea, and made them stand in a heap. *Joshua's* Prayer made the Sun to stand still, in the middle of its Course. *Hezekiah's* Prayer caus'd it to go back ten degrees, and likewise added fifteen Years to his Life, when he was just expiring. The *Israelites* Prayers undermin'd the Walls of *Jericho*, and that by strange and unaccountable means. *Esther's* Prayers chang'd the Sentence of Death pronounc'd against the *Jews*, and turn'd the intended Mischief upon their Enemies heads. *Ahab's* Humiliation and Prayer suspended and put a stop to God's Judgments, which were just ready to fall upon his idolatrous House. *David's* Prayers protected him in all his Dangers, and kept him safe in the midst of all the Tumults and Insurrections of his Enemies. *Manasseh's* Prayer freed him from the Chains of *Babylon*, and restor'd him, against all ordinary means, to the Throne of his Kingdom. *Elijah's* Prayer open'd and shut the Windows of Heaven. *Daniel's* Prayer shut the Lions mouths, and stopt the Rage of those furious Beasts. The time would fail me to rehearse all the great and mighty Atchievements of devout Prayer, which hath such an all-commanding Force, as no earthly Power is able to withstand. And no wonder, since it engages the whole Power of Heaven on its side, and fetches to its assistance that Omnipotency that made all things out of nothing. In the New Testament, our Saviour hath secur'd to us the Success of our Petitions, saying, *Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be open'd unto you; Mat. 7. 7.* And lest we should think any thing too hard for him to give, or too good for us to receive, he hath told us, *that whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name, he will give it us.* And our Text tells us, *that if we ask, we shall receive:* which is sufficient Encouragement, in all our Wants and



and Necessities, to address to him for the Supply of them. Yea, if there be a willing Mind, God Almighty promises to prevent our Petitions, and to give sometimes before and without asking: *Before they call* (saith he) *I will answer*; and *I was found of them that sought me not*.

But yet we must note, that 'tis not all asking neither that will prevail; for St. James tells us, that *many ask, and receive not, because they ask amiss*. Our Petitions then must be duly qualify'd and presented, before they can obtain their desir'd Effect: and how that is, because it is so much our Interest to know, I shall endeavour briefly to declare.

To which end, care must be had to the Matter and Manner of asking; in both which there may be, and too frequently are, such Failures, as hinder the Success of our Petitions.

For the Matter of our Prayers, it must be such things only, as are agreeable to the Will of God, and suitable to our real Wants and Necessities; not such as administer fuel to our Lusts, and so tend to the dishonour of God, and the destruction of our selves. To this last sort of things, St. James chiefly refers, in saying, *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your Lusts*; Jam. 4. 3.

For the Manner of asking, the same Apostle directs us,

(1.) To ask in Faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavers is like a Wave of the Sea, driven with the wind and tossed: For let not that Man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord; a double-minded Man is unstable in all his ways: Jam. 1. 6, 7, 8. By which we learn, that Faith, or a firm Persuasion of the Goodness of God, is a necessary Requisite or Ingredient of an effectual Prayer; and to ask with success, we must stedfastly believe that we shall receive. For God having promis'd to give good things to them that ask them, there can be no reason to doubt it, unless we question whether he be either able or willing to perform his Promise; both which highly derogate from the Glory of his Power, and cast unworthy Reflections upon his Truth and Faithfulness. 'Tis for this reason that Unbelief stands so severely condemn'd in Holy Scripture, because it bespeaks a groundless Diffidence or Distrust of God's Mercy or Ability to help us, and evermore ariseth from some false Apprehensions of his Nature; yea, it virtually puts the Lye upon Truth it self, and charges the Almighty with Impotence or Imposture: which things must be hate-



ful unto God, and render all our Prayers an Abomination to him. So that if we would have our Prayers succeed, they must be offer'd up in Faith, with a firm Constancy of Mind, and a stedfast Assurance of receiving what we are commanded and encourag'd to ask.

(2.) To ask aright, we must ask with Humility, and a due Sense of our Wants and Unworthiness; for *God resisteth the Proud, and giveth his Grace only to the Humble.* He loaths the arrogant and ostentatious babbling of the Hypocrite, and measures our Devotion not by its Length or Loudness, but by the inward Humility of the Mind, and a submissive Dependence upon him. Hence we read, that he accepted the Address of the poor Publican, who in a humble sense of his own Unworthiness could only say, *Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner!* when he rejected with disdain the conceited Vaunts and Harangues of the Pharisee. *Lord, thou hearest the Desire of the Humble* (saith the Psalmist) *thou preparest their Heart, and thine Ear hearkeneth thereunto;* Psal. 10. 17. Our Minds must be humble, and our Hearts, like some sorts of Spices, must be broken, before their Breathings can ascend up *like Incense*, or *yield a sweet-smelling Savor.* And therefore Humility and Lowliness of Mind must always accompany our Petitions, if we mean to be heard, or receive any benefit by them.

(3.) To ask aright, it must be done with Earnestness and Importunity: 'tis the  *fervent Prayer of a righteous Man,* that is alone  *effectual and availeth much,* Jam. 5. 16. *Qui timide rogat, docet negare;* he that asks coldly or faintly, does but court a denial: for such weak languishing Wishes plainly declare, that we neither set any value upon, nor heartily desire what we ask for. Ardent Desires and Longings after any thing, are quickly seen in the Zeal and Importunity of the Suit; and consequently faint Requests betray that Coldness and Indifference, that deafens the Ears of the Almighty, hinders the Success of our Prayers, and puts a stop to the gracious Returns of the Divine Bounty. Nor may we wonder, if that prevail not with God, which we find will do nothing with our selves: for a Petitioner seldom obtains any thing, who by the Faintness and Indifference of his Suit, shews that he neither needs nor desires it. And how can we expect, that the Divine Favours should be easily granted to slight and heartless Petitions? And therefore the Apostle wills, to *pray always without fainting,*  
to

*the Sentences that begin the Liturgy.* 9

to be instant in Prayer, and to persevere therein with Thanksgiving: which are absolutely necessary to an Answer and Return of our Prayers.

Lastly, To ask so as to receive, we must join our Endeavours to our asking, and labour for what we ask, without which 'twill be in vain to expect it: for God's Graces are but spiritual Aids and Assistances to our natural Powers, not new Creations of the whole Habit in an instant. He doth not now work by an irresistible Will, or influence our Minds by any supernatural Operations, wherein we are wholly passive; but he graciously seconds our Endeavours, and helps our Infirmities in the use of means: so that we must strive and labour for Holiness, as we do for the attaining of any other Perfection or Accomplishment. For the Spirit of God works by the methods of Labour and Reason, and we are to use our Industry and Diligence in working out our own Salvation, as if we were left to our selves, and had no assistance at all. So that the way to recover our selves to a vertuous Temper after a vicious Course of Life, is (as one hath well observ'd) the very same by which a Man recovers his Health after a long Disease, *viz.* by God's Blessing upon the diligent use of fit means; and any other way is now no more to be expected, than Prophecy or Miracles. This we may learn from that divine Prayer, which Christ himself hath taught us; wherein tho he hath will'd to pray for our daily Bread, yet our Labour must be added to and accompany our Petition, or else 'tis presumption to expect it: and tho we pray against Temptation, and to be deliver'd from Evil, yet we must strive against the Motions and Occasions of both, e'er our striving against them in Prayer will be of any avail.

Our Devotion then must be attended with the other great Instruments of Religion, such as reading, hearing, meditating on God's Word, receiving the holy Sacrament, and the like; which things if we duly perform on our part, we may rest assured, that there will be no failure on God's: for he *giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not*; and *if we thus ask, we shall receive.*

From whence I proceed to the

Last Particular of the Text, *viz.* the Reason added in the Close to encourage our Petitions, in those words, *That your Joy may be full.* Joy is the natural Effect and Design of the Divine Blessings; for he that gives them, hath requir'd

quir'd the Receivers to *rejoice in them*, and that not in low and scanty Measures, but that *their Joy should be full*. Indeed a compleat *Fulness of Joy is only at God's right Hand*, and is the Blessedness reserv'd for our future State. Worldly Joy is empty, transitory, and unsatisfying; 'tis mingled with Sorrow, and attended with Bitterness: and therefore *Solomon* compares it to the crackling of Thorns under a Pot, which make a short blaze and noise, but are quickly out.

But there is a more spiritual Joy, that proceeds from the Practice of Vertue, and the Sense of the divine Love and Favour, which yields a more permanent and lasting Pleasure: And this is the Joy imply'd here in our Saviour's Promise, as the Result of our Prayers; to which the Apostle refers in his Request to the *Philippians*, saying, *Fulfil ye my Joy*, by the Unanimity of your Prayers, which will tend to the compleating of my Joy in your Happiness, *Phil. 2. 2.* And *St. John* had respect to the same, saying, *These things we write unto you, that ye also may have Fellowship with us, to the end that your Joy may be full*; *1 John 1. 4.* that is, that ye may have the Feelings of God's Grace at present, in the Joys and Comforts of the Holy Ghost, which will e'er long flow into that *Fulness of Joy*, and those *Rivers of Pleasure*, that are at God's right Hand for evermore: stiled by the Apostle, *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*, *1 Pet. 1. 8.*

Thus I have laid before you the Precept of the Text, *Ask*; the Promise annex'd to it, *And ye shall receive*; together with the End and Design of both, *That your Joy may be full*.

Before I conclude, I must take notice of a double Fault in this matter. The one is, the Neglect; the other, the ill Performance of this Duty: both which deprive us of the Benefit and Success of it. *St. James* hath put us in mind of both, saying of some, *Ye have not, because ye ask not*; and of others, *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss*; *Jam. 4. 2, 3.* The former loseth the Blessing for lack of asking; the latter goes without it, for not asking aright. To rectify both, let us,

1st, Beware of neglecting our Prayers; which argues a Contempt of God, and casting off our Dependence upon him, as if we could help our selves, and do well enough without him. This leads to Atheism, and an utter Forgetfulness of God, and that to eternal Death and Damnation; for *the Wicked shall be turn'd to Hell* (saith the Psalmist) *with all the People that forget God*: and elsewhere God is call'd upon,



upon, to pour out his Indignation upon the Heathen, and the Families that call not upon his Name. Wherefore let us not cease to be humble Suiters to the Divine Majesty, being well assur'd of being heard, and not to be dismiss'd without a Blessing.

But still let us, 2dly, take care that we pray aright, and not ask amiss, either for the Matter or Manner of our Prayers. Let us pray heartily, fervently, and constantly, adding our Endeavours to our Prayers, and asking all in the name of Christ; that is, for his Merits, and through his Mediation, as our Church teaches us to conclude all our Prayers. In a word, *Let us* (as we are sufficiently encourag'd) *come boldly to the Throne of Grace, to ask Grace and Mercy to help in time of need.* And by thus asking Grace now, we shall e'er long receive a Crown of Glory. Which God grant, &c.

## DISCOURSE II.

EZEK. XVIII. 27.

*When the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive.*

**H**AVING premis'd some things by way of Introduction, touching the Duty of Prayer; I come now to the Liturgy or Common-Prayer it self, which begins with a Rubrick or Direction for Morning-Prayer, in these words:

*At the beginning of Morning-Prayer, the Minister shall read with a loud voice some one or more of these Sentences of the Scriptures that follow; and then he shall say that which is written after the said Sentences.*

Before we enter upon our Prayers, or expect that God should hear us speaking to him, our Church hath wisely order'd us, first to hear God speaking to us, and to begin with some Sentence of Holy Scripture, to excite and encourage our Devotion. To which end, the Church hath selected some particular Portions of God's Word, very proper to usher in our Prayers, and to render them the more accep-

acceptable. Among which, this which I have read to you is the first, and begins our Publick Liturgy : *When the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness, that he hath committed, &c.* The words are a Call or Encouragement to turn from Sin, which is the great Impediment to true Devotion, and marrs all the Success of our Petitions ; for *the Prayer of the wicked (saith Solomon) is an Abomination to the Lord*, Prov. 21. 27. 'Tis rather a mocking than serving God, to beg pardon for those Sins which we resolve to re-iterate and delight in the practice of ; and so it is, to ask those Graces and Blessings, of which we are neither sensible of the lack, nor desirous of the supply : such Prayers rather provoke than prevail with God. *If I regard Iniquity in my heart (saith holy David) the Lord will not hear my Prayer ;* Psal. 66. 18. *We know (saith the blind Man in the Gospel) that God heareth not Sinners,* John 9. 31. And indeed how can we expect, that God should listen to our Prayers, when we hearken not to his Precepts ? or that he should bestow his Blessings upon us, when we will not leave a Lust or a Sin for him ? So that Repentance or turning from Sin being so necessary a Preparative to true Devotion, and the best Ingredient of an effectual Prayer, it was requisite the Publick Liturgy should begin with an Exhortation and Encouragement to it : And lest any should think it too late to repent, and that the Gates of Mercy were shut against them, to prevent Despair, it was fit to assure them from God's Word, that at what time, or *whensoever a wicked Man turneth away from the Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive.* In which words we have both the Nature, and the Reward of true Repentance. For the

Nature of it, 'tis here describ'd by two things : First, by *turning away from the Wickedness that we have committed.* And, secondly, by *the doing that which is lawful and right.*

For the Reward of it, 'tis here affirm'd, that *whensoever a Man doth so, he shall save his Soul alive.* I shall speak something particularly of both these ; and shall begin with the Nature of true Repentance, and therein consider the

First Branch of it, which is the *turning away from the Wickedness that we have committed.* This is the first step to Amendment and Reformation, to be so sensible of the Evil and Danger of Sin, as to turn away from it ; which

is so necessary and essential a part of Repentance, that 'tis in Scripture often describ'd by it: for the Call to Repentance is there express'd by, *Turn ye every one from your evil ways.* And this turning away from the Wickedness we have committed, must be, 1<sup>st</sup>, Cordial and hearty; that is, not barely from the doing of evil, but from all delight in it; not only from the practice, but from the love of it. The ceasing from Sin be indeed a good step, yet 'tis not the whole of Conversion; for that implies a Change of the Mind, as well as the outward Actions. The bare refraining from Sin, or withdrawing a Man's self from doing wickedly, is not sufficient to denominate him truly penitent; for there may be many external Motives and Inducements that may restrain the outward Acts of Sin, when the inward Complacency in it may still remain. Shame and Fear, the want of Power and Opportunity may sometimes hinder Men from committing Wickedness, when the Mind is all the while dispos'd and desirous of it: in which cases they are not so properly said to leave Sin, as Sin is to leave them. And therefore the turning away from the Wickedness we have committed, includes the turning away from all love and liking to it, the breaking off all acquaintance and correspondence with it, and forgoing it altogether. True Repentance implies a disapproving of what we have done amiss, so as to do it or desire it no more, nor to continue any longer in that, which we are heartily sorry that we ever did: Yea, it implies a perfect hatred and detestation of it. So *David* express'd his Repentance by his *hating every false way*, Psal. 119. and *St. Paul*, by *abhorring that which is evil*, Rom. 12. both which Expressions denote such an inward Dislike, as makes us to loath as well as leave them, and to decline them upon Principles of Hatred and Abhorrence of them. Again,

2<sup>dly</sup>, The turning from Sin must be universal, that is, from all Sin and Wickedness; not only from gross, open, and presumptuous Sins, but from all secret and hidden Impieties: we must keep no reserve for any, nor roll any sweet morsel under the Tongue; for he that retains any one darling Vice, is no forsaker of Sin, tho he may seem to refrain from some, but a Turner from one Sin to another: he doth not break with his former Vices, but only makes his choice of them, sticking to those he likes best, and refusing the rest. Thus we read of *Herod*, that he reform'd many things at the preaching of *John the Baptist*,  
and



and heard him gladly, but still kept *Herodias*, his Brother *Philip's* Wife; and that depriv'd him of the Honour and Reward of all. And there are too many who seek to compound the matter with God, parting with one Vice, that they may stick the closer to another. But these do but dally with God, and deceive themselves; for he that keeps any one Sin, does truly forsake none: *He that offendeth in one point (saith St. James) is guilty of all.* For he despises the Authority that runs thro and requires all; and if he keep one Law, or leave one Sin, 'tis not so much to please God as himself, which we may be sure cannot be well-pleasing to him. Moreover,

3dly, The turning from Sin and Wickedness must be constant, bidding a final adieu to it, so as to return to it no more. For 'tis not enough to forbear Sin a while, and then to fall to it again: this is rather revolting than repenting; 'tis, as *St. Peter* expresses it, to *return with the Dog to his Vomit, and with the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*; 2 Pet. 2. 22. When God is said to *speak peace* unto returning Sinners, 'tis always with this Proviso, *that they turn not again to Folly*, Psal. 85. 8. We break our peace with God, when we break his Laws; and as Relapses in most cases are very dangerous, so in this do they mightily widen our breach with God, and oft-times leave no room for Reconciliation: and therefore we must so turn from our evil ways, as to return to them no more; and as *Christ died unto Sin once*, so should we live no longer therein. Thus we see what we are to turn from, viz. from all Sin and Wickedness, with a hearty Grief and Sorrow for committing it, and with a firm Resolution never again to return to it, which is the first Branch of a true and unfeigned Repentance.

The second teaches us, what we are to turn to; and that is, to God and his Ways, from which by Sin we have swerv'd and withdrawn our selves. And this being meet, right, and our bounden Duty, 'tis express'd here by *doing that which is lawful and right*: in the New Testament 'tis express'd by *bringing forth fruits meet for Repentance*; that is, by doing works worthy of and becoming such a Change and Renovation of Mind: for 'tis not enough to turn away from the Wickedness that we have committed, tho too many go not so far; but we must go farther, to compleat our Repentance, and do that which is lawful and right.

Now the doing that which is lawful and right, supposes a Law or Rule to act by; and that is, the Will of God, deliver'd to us either by the Light of Nature and Reason, or by the Light of Scripture and Revelation: by both which we are directed in our Duty to God and Man, and by swerving from either, we depart from the way that we should go. The Light of Nature makes a great part of our Duty plain before us; and where that is defective, 'tis abundantly supply'd by the Light of Scripture: so that we cannot be at a loss to know what is lawful and right, if we have but Hearts to do and practise it. *He hath shew'd thee, O Man, (saith the Prophet Micah) what is good, and what the Lord thy God requires of thee; namely, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God; Mic. 6. 8.* To do justly, is to do right to our Neighbour: To love mercy, is to see that the Poor and Needy have right: To walk humbly with God, is to do right to our Maker, to whom all things in Heaven and Earth are bound to bow and obey: And to live soberly, is to do right to our selves, who are requir'd to be temperate in all things; the Welfare of Soul and Body depending upon our so doing. In short, to do that which is lawful, is to do what the Law of God commands or allows; to do that which is right, is to do what right Reason directs or approves of, and thinks meet and fit to be done: and by both we are fully instructed in what is lawful and right, and thorowly furnish'd to every good Work.

Thus we see the Nature of Repentance in both its Branches, *viz.* in turning away from all Sin and Wickedness, which perverteth our ways; and in turning unto God, by doing that which is lawful and right, abounding in Acts of Piety and Devotion towards God, of Justice and Charity towards our Neighbour, and of Temperance and Sobriety towards our selves; which is the whole Duty of Man. From whence I proceed,

II. To the Promise or Reward here annex'd to true Repentance, which is Life and Salvation: *He shall save his Soul alive.* When a Man turneth away from the Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, *he shall save his Soul alive.* Life is the greatest Blessing of this World, as Salvation is of the next; and both compleat our Happiness, and render it an exceeding great Recompence of Reward. This makes it a Repentance

not



*not to be repented of*: for tho worldly Sorrow worketh Death, yet this sorrowing after a godly sort will end in Joy, and lead to eternal Life.

*He shall save his Soul alive.* Why! Is not the Soul immortal in its own nature, and must of course live for ever? Where then is the privilege of saving that alive, which cannot die; or keeping that still in being, which cannot cease to be?

In answer to this, 'tis one thing to live for ever, and another to save the Soul alive; the one may be in perpetual Misery and Torment, the other implies endless Bliss and Salvation. For *non tam vivere quam valere vita est*; Life consists not so much in being, as in well-being. To live in continual Pains and Torments, is the worst of Deaths; and 'tis better not to be at all, than to be for ever miserable. Tho the Souls of the Wicked are not annihilated, yet they are in a worse condition; for our Saviour speaks of Mens *losing their own Souls*, telling us that *the whole World* can make no amends for the loss of them; and that nothing can be given in exchange for them. This State of Perdition implies not the utter Destruction, but, what is worse, the eternal Death and Damnation of the Soul.

Now Repentance is the only Remedy to secure us from this miserable Condition; for he that turneth away from his evil ways, *shall save his Soul alive*: that is, he shall escape the Death due to his Sin and Wickedness, and instead of that shall receive the Reward of everlasting Life. So Solomon assures us, *Prov. 12. ult. In the way of Righteousness is Life, and in the path-way thereof there is no Death.*

(1.) I say, he that turneth from Sin unto God shall escape the Death due to his former Wickedness. *Death* (saith the Apostle) *is the Wages of Sin*; 'tis as due to it, as Wages is to Work: and that not temporal Death only, which is a short Separation of the Soul from the Body, but spiritual Death, which is the Separation of the Soul from Christ; and likewise eternal Death, which is the Separation of Soul and Body from God for evermore. There is that Guilt and Heinousness in Sin, which justly deserves all this; and the Justice of God obliges him to inflict it on all obstinate and impenitent Offenders. The first Transgression put all Mankind under the Sentence of Death, and our actual Transgressions bring upon us a greater Condemnation. Now our Repentance will reverse this Sentence, and procure not only a Reprieve, but a full Pardon of all our Offences:



Offences: so we are assured by the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. 55. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* He will multiply his Pardons, as we have our Transgressions; and being rich in Mercy, is as willing to impart his Favours, as we are to ask them. In short, if we turn away from the Wickedness we have committed, and return to God and his ways, Death shall have no power over us; temporal Death shall not hold us, and eternal Death shall never seize us. Neither shall we only escape Death, which is the negative part of Happiness, but we shall,

(2.) Obtain eternal Life, which is the positive part and completion of it: So God by the Prophet assures us, in this Chapter, ver. 21. *If the wicked turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, and not die.* For as the Wages of Sin is Death, which will be surely paid to all that go on still in their Wickedness; so the Gift of God is eternal Life, which will be as certainly bestow'd upon all that truly turn to him. The Promises to this purpose are so numerous, and withal so obvious to any that read the Holy Scriptures, that 'twill be needless to repeat them. When the Soul turns to God, he presently turns to it; he hears all its Prayers, and crowns them with Bliss and Immortality: all which, and much more than can be express'd, is contain'd in this gracious Promise, *He shall save his Soul alive.* And this being so great encouragement to true Devotion, our Church hath wisely order'd this Sentence to be read, at the entrance upon our publick Prayers.

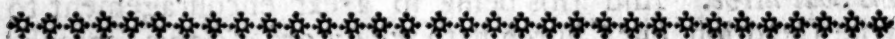
Thus we see both the Nature and the Reward of true Repentance.

The Use that I shall make of both, shall be,  
1<sup>st</sup>, To exhort you to turn from the Wickedness that you have committed, and that both speedily and heartily, which you see is the only way to Life and Salvation: To which end, let me advise you to take a strict review of the whole Course of your past Life, and wherein soever you have offended God, either by omitting what he requires, or committing what he forbids, there to bewail your Sins before God, to be heartily sorry for what you have done, and to resolve to do so no more. If you have neglected the Prayers and Sacraments of the Church,

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which you are commanded to frequent, be sensible of the Miscarriage, and labour to amend it: if you have fail'd of your Duty to your Neighbour or your selves, by being unjust to the one, or intemperate to the other, lament thy Follies, and avoid them for the future. In a word, make haste and delay not to turn from all your Iniquities, knowing that the longer you go on in them, the farther you go out of the way, and the more difficult will be your Return; and you may assure your selves, that God will not forgive one Fault to him, who goes on to commit another. But because the bare Abstinence from Sin is not sufficient, I must exhort you,

2dly, To do that which is lawful and right, and if you would save your Souls alive, you must not only die unto Sin, but live unto Righteousness; for whilst you continue in Sin, you have only a Name to live, but are really dead; you have no sense of Good, or motion towards it; no Union with God or Christ, whose Separation from the Soul is a worse Death than the Soul's Separation from the Body. Cease then to do evil, which leads to this spiritual Death, and do that which is lawful and right, and live for evermore. Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure and of good report; if there be any Vertue, if there be any Praise, think on these things. And so think of them, as to make them your daily Delight and Practice; so shall ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and in the end everlasting Life: Which God grant, &c.



### DISCOURSE III.

PSAL. LI. 3.

*I acknowledg my Transgressions, and my Sin is ever before me.*

**T**HIS is the second Sentence selected to introduce our Prayers; which, if duly observ'd, would help much to procure Audience, and to promote the Success of them.

The words are part of *David's* penitential Psalm, wherein he sadly bewails his two great and crying Sins, viz. the Murder of *Uriah*, and his Adultery with *Bathsheba*; both which



which being attended with high and heinous Aggravations, fill'd him with exceeding great Trouble and Sorrow. In the first Verse he earnestly begs for Mercy and Pardon at God's hands, saying, *Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great Goodness: according to the multitude of thy Mercies, do away mine Offences.* And the better to prevail for Mercy, he prays in the next Verse to be purg'd from the Filth, as well as freed from the Guilt of his Sins; saying, *Wash me thorowly from my Wickedness, and cleanse me from my Sin.* And then, for a Motive to both, he adds the words of the Text; *For I acknowledg my Transgressions, and my Sin is ever before me.* From the Connection and Dependence of the words upon the foregoing, we may learn,

That the best means of obtaining God's pardoning Mercy, is to acknowledg our Transgressions; and the best way to have him to cast our Sins behind him, is to have them ever before us.

But to speak to the Words absolutely, and in themselves, I shall,

- I. Propound to you *David's* Example in this matter, with the many and great Benefits which he receiv'd thereby: And,
- II. Shew it to be our Duty and Wisdom to imitate him herein, together with the unspeakable Blessings we shall reap by so doing.

I. I must propound to you Holy *David's* Example in the case and method of his Repentance: And here we find him affirming two things concerning himself; the first is, his acknowledging his Faults, *I acknowledg my Transgressions*: the second is, his constant sight and sense of them, *My Sin is ever before me.* The former may relate to a general Acknowledgment of his evil ways, or his owning himself to be a Sinner: The latter may refer to some particular Sin, which he had more especially in his eye; both which are very observable in the course of his Repentance.

First then, he acknowledges in general his Transgressions, and owns himself to be a Sinner; *I acknowledg my Transgressions.* The first step to Amendment, is the acknowledging a Fault; and therefore this devout Penitent accordingly begins with it.

Now his acknowledging his Transgressions, implies in it these two things, viz. the knowing of them himself, and



the confessing them to others ; both which are necessary to true Repentance.

(1.) I say, *David's* acknowledging his Transgressions implies his knowing or owning them himself ; for no Man can or will acknowledg that of which he hath no knowledg : and therefore some Translations instead of, *I acknowledg my Transgressions*, read, *I know mine Iniquities*. And 'tis as if he had said, " I am conscious of the Evil " that I have done, and sensible of the Wofulness of my " Condition by reason of it : I see my Folly, and am " thorowly acquainted with the Iniquity of my ways." This he did not know presently, for he seem'd a while to rejoice in his Iniquity, or at least to have no regret or remorse for the Commission of it, till *Nathan* came and charg'd him home with the Guilt of it, and by the Parable of the *Ewe-Lamb* convinc'd him of his Oppression and Injustice ; saying to him, *Thou art the Man*, that hast done these things. By this he came to a feeling and knowledg of his Transgressions ; and that not barely of the Fact by him committed, but of the Foulness, the Scandal, and other aggravating Circumstances that attended it.

Not that he was wholly ignorant before, of what he had done : for he could not but know, how accessory he was to the Murder of *Uriah*, and how he had defiled *Bathsheba* his Wife ; and that these were both great and grievous Sins, being the taking away the Life of the one, and the Chastity of the other.

But he knew not these things in the manner that he should, and afterwards did know them : he consider'd not how hateful and provoking they were to God, how scandalous and injurious to others, and how fatal and pernicious they were to himself : he regarded not the Evil and Danger of his ways, but was apt to disguise and conceal them ; he was willing to excuse and pass them off as slight matters, saying of his Murder, That his hand was not upon *Uriah*, but he was taken away by the Chance of War, and the Sword of the Enemy ; and of his Adultery, That it was but one single Act, and upon strong Temptations ; that he was not singular therein, or the only Person that had so offended. Thus extenuating matters, and flattering himself that they were not so bad as some imagin'd.

But now he knew things otherwise, and beheld his Iniquities in their proper colours : he took off the mask and the paint that was before laid upon them, and saw them  
in

in their own ugly and deform'd shape, which made him loath and abhor them. He enhanc'd his Guilt, from the Dignity of his Place and Station, and the many Favours and Obligations that God had heap'd upon him; and from thence knew how highly he had offended God, how he had griev'd many of his good Subjects, what encouragement he had given to the bad, and what disgrace he had brought both upon his Person and Profession. These things he was now better acquainted with, and more concern'd for, than he was formerly. But this is not all; for,

(2.) His acknowledging his Faults imply'd not only his personal knowledg of them, but his opening and confessing of them to others, displaying the Evil of them in all their Circumstances; to God in the first place, and likewise to Men as occasion requir'd. So he did in the matter of *Uriah*: for he acknowledg'd how he made him drunk, to compass his wicked ends upon him; and tho his own hand was not upon him, to slay him himself, yet how he order'd *Joab* to set him in the front of the Battel, that he might be taken away; and charges himself with the Guilt of his Blood, praying in this Psalm to be deliver'd from Blood-guiltiness, and that it may not be laid to his Charge, *ver. 14.*

The same he did with reference to his other Sin of Adultery, which he acknowledg'd with Shame and Sorrow, not lessening or excusing it by any palliating Shifts or Evasions, but heightening and aggravating it in all its black and odious Circumstances; for we find him confessing, how he involv'd others in the Guilt of his Sin, by sending Messengers to *Bathsheba* to entice her to his Bed, and made others accessory to his Crime, by using them as Instruments for the gratifying of his sensual Lust. This prick'd him to the heart, and fill'd him with great grief and remorse. But that which wounded him most of all, was the Consideration how he had offended God, by violating his Laws, and breaking through the strongest Obligations: this smote him to the quick, and made him in a manner overlook all other things. For tho he had sinned against *Uriah* by shedding his Blood, and against *Bathsheba* by taking away her Vertue and her Honour, yet all this seem'd nothing, in comparison of the Affront and Indignity he had thereby offer'd unto God; which made him say in the next words to our Text, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; ver. 4.* where he



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charges himself home with the Guilt of his Impieties, and discharges God, *whom he justify'd in his Saying, and clear'd when he was judg'd.*

Thus we see what is meant by *David's* acknowledging his Transgressions, which he made not a By-work, to be done only now and then, but 'twas his daily and continual Exercise: So he tells us in the

Second Part of our Text, *My Sin is ever before me.* He suffer'd not the Knowledge of his Sin to slip out of his Mind, but he kept up a constant Sense and Remembrance of it; and as he set God always in his sight, so did he set his Sins too ever before his Eyes, that he might not be mov'd to do Evil: *My Sin* (saith he) *is ever before me.* Which words I find thus paraphras'd by a Reverend Father: "The Thoughts of my Sin never leave me, but  
" meet me at every turn; I can do nothing, nor go any  
" where, but my Misdeeds present themselves before me:  
" methinks I still hear *Nathan* saying unto me, *Thou art the*  
" *Man!* which makes my Guilt to stare me in the Face,  
" and to behold the Fall of the honest, faithful and in-  
" nocent *Uriah.* The Voice of his Blood is still in my  
" Ears, and crieth loudly from Heaven against me; if I  
" walk on my Roof or Gallery, *Bathsheba* and the Wic-  
" kedness committed with her come to my mind, and the  
" Sight of my Chamber and my Bed revive the memory  
" of my Sin; I cannot write a Letter, without thinking  
" on the unhappy and bloody Lines I wrote to *Joab*, and  
" the Tidings of any one's Death brought to me, seem to  
" tell me of the Murder of *Uriah.*" Thus tender and importunate was his Conscience, to urge him upon all occasions with the remembrance of his Sin, pulling him as it were by the sleeve at every turn, and never suffering him to forget the Evil he had done. This drove him daily unto God to seek for Pardon, to whom he betook himself right humbly to sue for Mercy. And the Effect was, that his remembering his Sins, made God to blot them out of the Book of his remembrance; and his having them always before his Face, caus'd God to cast them behind his Back. This mov'd him to Thankfulness unto God, for not exercising the Rigour of his Justice upon him, but shewing him Mercy and Loving-Kindness. Again, his Sin being ever before him, mov'd him to Pity and Commiseration towards others, that were at any time overtaken with the same or the like Faults. And, Lastly, this mov'd him to  
greater



greater Care and Watchfulness, to look to his Steps, and prevent all future Failings.

Thus I have set before you the Example of Holy *David* in this matter, which is an excellent Pattern or Precedent for us to follow. And this will lead me, in the next place,

To recommend his pious Example to your Imitation, which was the reason of the Church's appointing this Passage of Holy Writ to be read, before we begin our publick Prayers.

*First* then, Let us, from this pious Pattern, learn to acknowledge our Transgressions; and instead of concealing or lessening, let us disclose and aggravate them. So we see the devout Psalmist did, for he here freely and frankly confesseth that he had sin'd against God, and that both by Birth and Practice he was a grievous Sinner: *Behold* (saith he) *I was shapen in Wickedness, and in Sin hath my Mother conceiv'd me*; and this original Corruption hath broke out into many actual Transgressions, for I have done Evil in thy Sight, neither can I hide from thee the Foulness of my Sin. This is a Direction for us to acknowledge and bewail both the Corruption of our Nature, and the Transgression of our Lives: Not that the same publick Acknowledgment that *David* here makes, or the same Degrees of Sorrow and Compunction, are necessary for all Persons; for *David* was a publick Person, and his Sins both notorious and scandalous; they gave great Trouble to some, and great Offence to others, by emboldening them in vicious Practices, and giving occasion to the Enemies of God and his Church to triumph and blaspheme: and therefore it was requisite that his Confession should be as open and notorious as his Sin, that as many were offended by his Fall, so they might rise and recover again by his Repentance; and as his Iniquity was publick, so should his Acknowledgment be too.

However, we may learn from it, that in all our Trespases and Failings, Acknowledgment must be made to God and the World, as occasion shall require; and indeed where there is a true Sense and Remorse for Sin, there will be a constant readiness to do so. *I acknowledge my Sin unto thee* (saith holy *David*) *and my Unrighteousness have I not hid*, Psal. 32. 5. And elsewhere, *Lord, I have sin'd exceedingly, I beseech thee take away the Iniquity of thy Servant, for I have done very foolishly.* True Repentance cannot

cannot be silent in such Cases ; and where the Heart is inwardly touch'd and prick'd with Remorse for Sin, there the Tongue will break forth in free and full Confession of it. All Guilt lies heavy upon the Soul that's loaden with it, and 'tis Confession alone that can discharge or remove it ; for that opens the Heart, gives vent to our Tears, and brings ease to the Mind : and therefore our Saviour calls all that are thus *weary and heavy laden* with the Burden of their Sins, *to come to him* by Confession and Prayer, and he will *give Rest unto their Souls*, Mat. 11. 28.

*Secondly*, Let us imitate this devout Psalmist, as in *acknowledging* our Transgressions, so in having *our Sins ever before us* ; that is, let us have a constant Sense and Sight of them, and lay them open not only before God, but before our selves, that we may behold them with Shame and Sorrow, and fully discover the Vileness and Heinousness of them. This is the best way both to amend our Faults, and to obtain the Pardon of them.

*1st*. I say, the having our Sins ever before us, is the best way to reform and amend them ; for by that means we shall the better see the Foulness and Deformity of them. What our Eyes are fix'd upon, will run much in our Minds, and we cannot easily forget what is continually before us ; the daily looking upon our Sins, and beholding our evil ways, will give us such a clear Sight of the Baseness and Unworthiness of them, as will lead us to abhor and abandon them : such a continual View will fix in us a Hatred and Detestation of them, and that will keep us from being easily surpriz'd or betray'd into them. There is nothing occasions Mens falling into greater Follies and Dangers, than Inadvertency and want of Consideration ; for that puts out their Eyes, and blindly hurries them on to all manner of Evil. When Men remove their Sin and their Danger out of their sight, and cast their Iniquities behind their back, they then easily *run into all Excess of Riot, and commit all Uncleaness with greediness* ; for when they have no sight of their Sins, they will have no fear of God before their Eyes, and by putting their Iniquities far from them, they remove his Judgments out of their sight : and then *corrupt are they, and become abominable ; there is none that doth Good, no not one*. Whereas the constant Sense and Sight of their Sins would give them such a dismal Prospect of the Guilt, the Filth, and

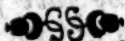


and the Danger of them, as would make them tremble, and affright them from the Commission of them. The frequent Thoughts and Sight of these things would serve to humble us for past Follies, and prevent future Miscarriages; which may teach us, by the Example of Holy *David*, to have our Sins ever before us. And the rather,

2ly. Because this is the best way to obtain the Pardon of them. This Motive we see here urg'd in our Text, where *David* having before ask'd for Mercy, uses this for an Argument, For I acknowledg my Transgressions in general, and my particular Sins are ever before me: and this effectually prevail'd for what he ask'd; for he elsewhere tells us, that *he confess'd his Sins unto God, and he immediately forgave the Iniquity of his Sin.* And indeed nothing more engages the Mercy and Goodness of God to overlook our Infirmities, than our own Sight and Sense of them; he *saw no Iniquity in Jacob, nor Perverseness in Israel.* When they came to see and be sorry for it in themselves, when the prodigal Son came to himself, and saw the Error of his ways, his former Follies and Extravagancies were soon forgiven, and the Sorrow for his Faults made him receiv'd with greater Joy. The poor Publican's smiting upon his Breast, and acknowledging his own Unworthiness, procur'd Favour to his Person and Petition; and his *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner!* soon prevail'd for his Justification.

These things are written for our Admonition and Encouragement, and are therefore prescrib'd by our Church to usher in our Prayers, to beget in us the greater Faith and Assurance of being heard. It remains then,

That we come to them with a deep and serious Sense and Acknowledgment of our evil Ways, especially of our more particular and darling Vices; knowing, that if we remember and repent of them our selves, they will be the sooner remitted and forgotten: otherwise, if we cast off the Sense and Sight of them now, they will be for ever remember'd against us, and set in order before us, to our eternal Shame and Confusion. To prevent which, let us imitate the Example of Holy *David*, and say with him, *I acknowledg my Transgressions, and my Sin is ever before me.*





## DISCOURSE IV.

## PSALM LI. 9.

*Hide thy face from my Sins, and blot out all mine Iniquities.*

**T**HIS penitential Psalm of *David* containing the several Parts and Passages of his Repentance, our Church hath wisely selected several Sentences of it, and order'd them to be publicly read, before we begin our Prayers, to mind us frequently of that which we are apt too easily to forget: for many encourage themselves in their Vices by the sad Example of *David's* Failings, when at the same time they overlook the pious Example of his sore and bitter Repentance. To awaken such drowsy and careless Sinners, they are told in the foregoing Sentence, how heartily he bewail'd and acknowledg'd his *Transgressions*, and with what shame and sorrow he set his Sins ever before him. And having done so, he beseeches God in the words of the Text, to turn away his face from them; and being still in his own mind, he begs him to remember them no more, which is the sense of the words now read: *Hide thy face from my Sins, and blot out all mine Iniquities.*

The great things he sues for throughout the whole Psalm, are the pardon and purging away of his Iniquities; that neither the Stain or Guilt of them might remain upon him. In his Suit for these things, he makes use of many and different Expressions: In the first Verse he beseeches God to *have mercy upon him, and to do away his Offences*. In the second Verse he begs to be *thoroughly washed from his Wickedness, and cleansed from his Sins*. To which end he prays, *ver. 7. to be purg'd with Hyssop, that he may be clean; and to be wash'd, that he might be whiter than Snow*. And here he expresses it by two other Phrases to the same purpose; to wit, turning the face from, and defacing his Iniquities, saying, *Hide thy face from my Sins, and blot out all mine Iniquities*. It was not for nothing that the Psalmist so often reiterates this Request, and urges it in so many various

various and different Phrases and Expressions. Which was done,

(1.) To shew the Earnestness and Importunity of his Suit; that he would take no denial, and not cease his Suit till his Request was granted. Cold and slight Requests oftner find Frowns than Favour, and few regard heartless Petitions: and therefore we read of *Jacob*, that he wrestled with God to obtain his Blessing, *Gen. 32. 26.* *Manasses* ply'd the Lord with Suit after Suit; for he pray'd and pray'd, and humbled himself greatly, before his Supplication was heard; *2 Chron. 33. 12, 13.* And *David* here renews his Request over and over, before he could obtain. This is that sacred Violence by which the Kingdom of Heaven is said to be taken; that is, by the force of importunate and fervent Prayer. 'Tis call'd sometimes a *striving with God* in Prayer, sometimes *praying without ceasing*; that is, not giving it off thro Weariness or Fainting, but *continuing instant in Prayer, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.*

(2.) *David's* often repeating his Petition for Pardon, shews us the exceeding great Worth and Excellence of it. Things of little or no value are but slightly ask'd and slenderly regarded, whereas things of worth are desir'd and sought after with diligence and importunity. And such *David* accounted the Pardon of Sin, which is of more value than all the World: for what are all the Profits, Honours, and Pleasures of this Life, to one that lies under the Sentence of Death? Or what comfort can the Offer of the whole World afford him that is just leaving it? The news of a Pardon is the only thing that can relieve the Spirits of a condemn'd Malefactor; for that is like raising him from the dead, and giving a new Life to all his dying Hopes and Wishes. And since we all lie under the heavy Sentence of Death and Damnation, what can give us any ease or comfort in such Circumstances, but the hopes of Mercy and Pardon, which is of more worth than a thousand Worlds? And that made holy *David* to double and treble his Petitions for it,

To signify, (3.) not only the Worth, but his Sense of the Want and absolute Necessity of it; that he was utterly lost and undone for ever without it. If a Prince's Pardon be sometimes necessary for the short Reprieve of a temporal Life, how much more necessary is God Almighty's Pardon to save the eternal Life both of Body and Soul; without

without which they will be seiz'd by eternal Death, and perish everlastingly?

Lastly, *David* reiterates his Requests for Pardon, to shew not only the Necessity, but likewise the Difficulty of obtaining it. The Guilt of Sin is sooner contracted than remov'd: the Psalmist quickly brought upon himself the Guilt of two foul Offences, but he could not so easily get rid of either, or gain the Forgiveness of them; that cost him many a Prayer, and many a Tear, before he could find that God was pacify'd, or his Soul restor'd to his lost Favour. We observ'd before, how *Manasseh besought the Lord again and again, and humbled himself greatly, before God would be intreated for him, and grant his request.* We read of *St. Peter*, that he *wept bitterly* before he could wash away his Sin with his Tears, and was urg'd to a treble Protestation of his Love to his Saviour, to atone for his threefold Denial of him, before he could come to any sensible recovery of his Love or Favour. A Wound, you know, is more easily receiv'd than remov'd, and a Debt is far more difficultly discharg'd than contracted. 'Tis true indeed that God is ready to forgive, and easy to be intreated upon fair and reasonable terms; but yet he will let Sinners know, what it is to provoke him, and to abuse his Goodness: he will have them sensible of their Sins, and to sue again and again for Mercy, before he will bestow it; and wisely delays his Kindness, till he sees them sufficiently humbled and qualify'd to receive it. So *David* here found it, and we must expect the same, if ever we hope to obtain his Pardon. And this may shew us

The dangerous Mistake of such as think, that a single *Lord have mercy upon us!* upon a sick Bed, will atone for all their Sins, and obtain Mercy and Pardon for them. This is a vain Presumption, that hath deluded many to their eternal destruction, and therefore 'twill be our Wisdom and Safety to beware of it. We see it cost *David* many a Prayer, attended with strong Cries and Groans; and can we think that our Debt will be discharg'd upon easier terms, or that a few empty Sighs and Groans upon a Death-bed will be sufficient to waite our Souls to Heaven? No, *be not deceiv'd, God will not be mock'd* with such slight and superficial Services; he expects deeper Sorrow and more earnest Requests, before he will *hide his face from our Sins, and blot out all our Iniquities.*

And



And this will lead me more particularly to consider the two Petitions of the Text, whereby this Pardon is set forth and desir'd; and they are God's *hiding his face from our Sins*, and his *blotting out all our Iniquities*: Both which being figurative and metaphorical Expressions, will require a little Explication.

First then, The Pardon of Sin is express'd here by God's *hiding his face from it*: by which is meant, his not considering or regarding of it. So Solomon interprets the *hiding the eyes from the Poor*, by not looking upon or regarding of them, Prov. 28. 27. When God forgave the Sins of the *Israelites*, 'tis said that he *beheld no Iniquity in Jacob*, nor *Perverseness in Israel*; Numb. 23. 21. meaning, that he turn'd away his face, and would not see or punish their Transgressions, which was his pardoning of them. The Expression is taken from the common custom or manner of speaking; for as Men can see nothing but what is before their face, and are blind to all that is behind their back, so God's forgiving of Sins is express'd by his putting them away from before his face, and casting them behind his back. So the new Translation reads these words, *Turn away thy face from my Sins*; thereby beseeching God not to behold or regard them.

But *hiding the face* denotes not only the turning it away, but likewise the casting a veil or covering over it, that it may not see the Foulness or Deformity of an Object. The Eye, when 'tis open and clear, cannot but see; and because all things are open and naked before God, the Psalmist begs him either to turn away, or to hide his face from his Misdeeds.

The Eyes of the Lord (saith the Psalmist) *run to and fro the Earth, to behold the evil and the good*; he is about our path, and about our bed, and espieth out all our ways. His all-seeing Eye pierceth into the darkest corners, and nothing can be hid from him; and because he is of purer eyes than to behold the least Iniquity without the greatest indignation, therefore some read the words of our Text, *Hide thine angry face from my Sins*. The Psalmist knew, that God could not but see his Sins, but he prays him not to look upon them in displeasure, or with an avenging eye, but so to see them, as if he saw them not; that is, either to overlook, or to behold them veil'd and cover'd with Christ's Righteousness, that they might not be imputed to him,

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him, and then he should be safe: for *blessed is he whose Unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose Sin is cover'd; blessed is the Man, unto whom the Lord imputeth no Sin: Psal. 32. 1.* So that David's praying God to hide his face from his Sin, is as if he had said, "I know, O Lord, that my Sin is not  
"hid from thee, and that my most secret Sins are in the  
"light of thy Countenance, tho I in the folly of my  
"heart thought my self secure, and that matters were so  
"carry'd, as to escape all discovery; yet now I find that  
"my ways are before thine eyes, and that thou ponderest  
"all my paths: I feel now by sad experience that thine eye  
"is upon me, and that thou spiest out all my ways; and  
"now I beseech thee look no longer upon them with an  
"angry Countenance, but turn away thy face from my  
"Misdeds, which cannot bear the strict view of thy all-  
"discerning Eye: and therefore remove them, I pray thee,  
"far from thy sight." This is the Sense of this first Petition, *Hide thy face from my Sins.*

The Second is, *And blot out all mine Iniquities;* where he begs the same thing, even Pardon of Sin, in a different Phrase. The former signifies, that his evil Deeds were still in his sight, from which he prays they might be remov'd: The latter, that they stood upon record against him, and therefore humbly beseeches they may be blotted out.

The Phrase imports, that our Iniquities are all written and set down in a Book, that may be open'd and produc'd against us. We read in Scripture of a twofold Book in God's keeping, both which are stil'd Books of Remembrance, wherein are recorded the Lives and Actions of Mankind, both good and bad.

The first is a Book of Remembrance for good Men, wherein are recorded all the Good-Works of those that *fear the Lord and think upon his Name;* of which we read, *Mal. 3. 16.* This is by St. Paul stil'd also the *Book of Life,* wherein the Names of the Saints and their good Deeds are enroll'd; of which we read, *Phil. 4. 3.*

The second is a Book of Remembrance for bad Men, wherein are register'd all the Errors and Miscarriages of those that *forget God, and have no fear of him before their eyes.* This is that black Book wherein every vain Thought, every idle Word, and every wicked Action is recorded and noted down; and in this Book are all our Transgressions written.



written. Both these Books will be open'd at the last Day, and out of them shall every one be judg'd, on those things written there, according to his Works; Rev. 20. 12, 15.

But beside these, Conscience also hath a Book, wherein our most secret Sins, which are known only to God and our selves, are written and set down in lasting and indelible Characters. This Book likewise will be then open'd, and the Keeper of it appear as a thousand Witnesses against us.

Now the forgiving of Sins is here express'd by blotting them out of these Books of Remembrance, so as to be utterly forgotten, and remember'd against us no more. The Expression alludes to the manner of contracting and discharging Book-Debts among Men; which you know are first written and noted down in a Book, afterward when paid, the Book is cross'd, and the Score is razed or blotted out. Nothing is more frequent in Holy Writ, than to call Sins by the name of Debts; for thereby the Sinner becomes indebted to divine Justice, which demands full Satisfaction, and to pay it to the uttermost farthing; Every Miscalriage is set down as it were upon a reckoning, and by our daily Transgressions we are still running upon the score.

Now Forgiveness of Sin is as the crossing of this Book, and blotting out the Account, so as not to be question'd for it any more; and this is what *David* here prays for, to wit, that God would raze his evil Deeds out of the Book of his Remembrance, that they might never appear against him, either to his confusion here, or condemnation hereafter. And this he did not for the particular Sins only which he here laments, as to the matter of *Bathsheba* and *Uriah*; but for all his Sins in general, saying, *Blot out all mine Iniquities*. Indeed the Sense and Guilt of those crying Sins put him upon a farther Search and Trial of his ways, by which he found his Misdeeds to increase upon him, and to swell to a greater Sum than he before thought; and lest any should be omitted, he beseeches God to blot out all his Iniquities, that no one of them might abide upon the score, but that all might be cancel'd and forgotten. He knew well enough that he was not able to satisfy for the least Sin, and that any one alone, if left unpardon'd, was enough to sink him into endless Perdition; and therefore begs that the whole Score might be wiped out, that all the Debt might be remitted, and that nothing might remain upon the Reckoning unsatisfy'd.



This Consideration should put us all upon a diligent Enquiry into our ways, and wherein soever we have done amiss, there to be sensible of our Fault and Folly, to ask pardon for it, and resolve to do so no more, that it may not stand upon the Account against us. So we find the Psalmist did, who was often upon the search and trial of his ways to this end; and lest he should be too partial to himself, puts himself upon the trial of God Almighty, saying, Psal. 139. 23, 24. *Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my Heart; prove me, and examine my Thoughts; look well if there be any way of Wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Thus we see the Sense of these two Petitions in the Text, which tho express'd in different terms, yet aim both at the same thing, *viz.* the Pardon and Forgiveness of our Offences.

From the whole we may infer two or three things by way of Application.

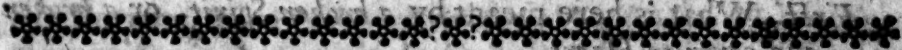
And, 1<sup>st</sup>, From *David's* praying to God, to *hide his face from his Sins*, we may infer the Ugliness and Deformity of Vice, which cannot bear the sight of God or Man. We all know what great pains the Sinner takes to hide his Wickedness from the eyes of Men, and what hard shifts and evasions he is many times put to, to palliate his Iniquities: And we see here how earnest *David* is with God to turn away his face, that he might not see them. Now this can proceed from nothing but the natural Foulness and Pravity of Sin, which cannot bear the light, but shuns the discovery of God and Men; and that may teach us to *have no fellowship with such unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them.*

2<sup>dly</sup>, From *David's* praying God to blot out his Iniquities, we may learn, that Sin leaves a blot or stain behind it; which must be wiped out, before we can appear pure or clean before God. Hence we find him often praying, *Wash me thorowly from my Wickedness, and cleanse me from my Sin*: that is, take away the Spot as well as the Guilt that cleaveth to me; and deliver me as well from the Pollution as the Punishment of mine Offences, that I may be found pure and unspotted in thy sight.

3<sup>dly</sup>, From *David's* Example here, let us learn to be instant with God for Pardon and Forgiveness, and not cease our Suit till it be obtain'd. This, we find, was his practice: for tho God had threaten'd that his Sin should not

go unpunish'd, yet he doth not fly from him as one forlorn and swallow'd up with despair, but follows him with one Petition after another, and never gave over till his Suit was granted, and his Pardon seal'd. Let us go and do likewise, doubling and trebling our Requests for Mercy, and then we shall find that the frequent and *servent Prayers of a righteous Man will avail much.*

*Lastly,* Let us learn with *David*, to pray God to blot out not only one, or some, but all our Iniquities: for as one Leak in a Ship is sufficient to sink the whole Vessel, so one Sin unpardon'd is enough to drown us for ever in Destruction and Perdition. One Breach in a Wall may let in the whole Power of an Enemy; and as one Debt unsatisfy'd may send and keep a Man still in Prison, so one Offence, if not remitted, may justly sentence us to and confine us for ever in Hell: for *he that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.* Let us not then leave one Sin remaining on the score, but cry earnestly to God to blot out all our Iniquities; and when the whole is remitted, we may be sure to find Favour: Which God grant, &c.



## DISCOURSE V.

### PSALM LI. 17.

*The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

**T**HESE Words are another preparatory Sentence, prescrib'd to introduce our Prayers: They are taken out of the same penitential Psalm with the foregoing; wherein *David* having in the preceding Verses bitterly bewail'd and acknowledg'd his Iniquities, and earnestly begg'd mercy and pardon for them, he thereupon felt his Heart to become more tender, and almost broken with Sorrow and Contrition for them: and finding that to be a Temper acceptable and well-pleasing unto God, by the inward Comfort he receiv'd by it, he breaks out into these words of our Text; *The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* The words shew us, what manner of Sacrifice it



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is that God expects and will accept from us; and that is a *humble, broken, and contrite Spirit*. In the Verse immediately foregoing, he tells us, that God desireth not Sacrifices, nor delights in Burnt Offerings: that is, in the legal Sacrifices of Bulls and Goats, or in the Incense and Perfumes that were offer'd upon the Altar, which alone yielded no grateful Savour in his Nostrils. Not that God despis'd his own Institution, or wholly rejected that which he himself requir'd; but the Words are to be understood comparatively: he cared not so much for Sacrifice, as for the Prayers and Praises of a broken Heart. The Expression is much like that, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*; that is, rather than Sacrifice; and that he regarded not Sacrifice, where Mercy was wanting. *Behold to obey* (saith he) *is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams*. So the Psalmist here, *Thou desirest not Sacrifice in comparison with a broken Heart*; for the Sacrifices of God, in which he principally delighteth, are a broken Spirit: a broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. In treating of which Words, I must shew,

First, What is here meant by a broken Spirit, or a broken and contrite Heart.

Secondly, That God is so far from despising it, that he delights in it far above all other Sacrifices.

Thirdly, I must enquire how or by what means such a broken Heart may be best gotten and kept.

First then, What is here meant by a broken Heart or contrite Spirit? In answer to which, by Heart and Spirit here we are to understand, not that fleshy part, that is in every Man's Breast, from whence the Blood and Spirits are convey'd to the other parts of the Body; but that spiritual part of Man, which is call'd the Soul, with all the Powers and Faculties of it, as the Understanding, Will, and Affections, call'd in Scripture the inner Man, or the hidden Man of the Heart. By a broken Heart is meant not a divided Heart, or a double Heart, shared between God and Mammon; for God will have the whole Heart or none, and we are bid to love him with all the Heart, and with all the Soul, and with all the Mind. But a broken Heart signifies a Heart bruis'd and wounded with a Sense and Sorrow for Sin; according to that of Solomon, *By Sorrow of Heart the Spirit is broken*, Prov. 15. 13. The Expression is figurative,



taken either from Corn ground in a Mill, and bruised into small pieces, or from the breaking of the Waves by dashing against a Rock, or from any other hard Substance beaten to powder: all which being apply'd to the Heart, are to be taken in a spiritual sense, and denote the Humiliation and Abasement of the Soul, from a due apprehension of its Offences committed against God. 'Tis oppos'd to a *hard stony Heart*, which is insensible, sturdy, and unyielding, incapable of the Impressions of Fear and Sorrow for what it hath done; having no awe or regard of God, nor being any more mov'd with his Mercies or Judgments, than a Stock or a Stone. This is the natural Disposition of the Heart, which becomes more and more *harden'd by the Deceitfulness of Sin*, till it become utterly void of Sense, and in a manner *past feeling*.

Now when the Heart is chang'd from this Senslessness and Stupidity, and becomes more tender, tractable, and relenting; when it comes to have a fear and dread of the Divine Majesty, and to feel a remorse and trouble for sinning against him; in a word, when it becomes humble and lowly in its own eyes, and full of inward Compunction and Sorrow, then is it rightly term'd a *broken Heart*, or a *contrite Spirit*, because it is broken into Sighs and Groans for all its Errors and evil Deeds; and being prick'd at the heart, cries out with St. Peter's Converts, *What shall we do to be sav'd?* This Temper is variously express'd in Sacred Writ; sometimes by *troubled, bruised, and wounded Spirit*; sometimes by a *meek, melting, and broken Heart*; which is in the sight of God of great price. And this will lead me to the

*Second* thing propounded, which is to shew this to be the most acceptable Offering that can be made to him. The Present of a broken Heart is of more value and repute with God, than all the legal Sacrifices and Offerings of the Old Law. 'Tis here call'd the Sacrifices of God, because 'tis of all other the most pleasing and delightful to him. The Sighs and Groans of a broken and contrite Heart are a more graceful Melody in the ears of God, than the most charming Musick without them. The panting and breathing of a humble Spirit, send up a sweeter-smelling Savour, than Clouds of costly Incense and Perfumes. The Tears of a truly penitent Soul are more precious, than any Drink-Offerings; and the pious Ardors of a de-

vout Heart, better than all sorts of Burnt-Offerings. In short, Sorrow and Remorse for Sin will prevail more with God, than all the Calves and Oxen in the Stall; and nothing that we offer can be more pleasing and acceptable to him, than a Heart truly smitten with Sorrow and Contrition for our Sins. This is the Sacrifice of Sacrifices, without which the most gaudy and pompous Services are but an *Abomination* to him.

*A broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* The Term is diminutive, and includes more than it seems to express: he will not only *not despise*, but highly value and esteem it; for so the Phrase often signifies. When the Apostle bids us *not to despise Prophesying*, he means that we should honour and make a great account of it. And when Christ saith he will not *cast out those that come to him*, his meaning is, that he will lovingly receive and embrace them. In like manner, the *not despising* a contrite Heart, signifies that 'tis of all other Services and Sacrifices the most acceptable to him. Now of this Acceptance, we have many plain Testimonies and Examples in Holy Scripture: *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken Heart* (saith the Psalmist) *and he saveth such as be of a contrite Spirit*; Psal. 34. 18. Again, *He healeth them that are broken in Heart, and giveth Medicine to heal their Sickness*; Psal. 147. 3. The Prophet *Isaiah* brings in God Almighty, saying, *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the humble, and to revive the Heart of the contrite ones*; Isa. 57. 15. And Chap. 66. 2. *To him will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.* All which shew us how acceptable to God is a meek and a broken Spirit; for he is not only ever nigh it, which is a great favour, but he vouchsafes to dwell with it: and tho the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him, yet he is pleas'd to reside within the narrow limits of a contrite Heart; he revives it with the Comforts of his Presence, and supplies it with Cordials that keep it from fainting.

Neither are Instances wanting to confirm our Faith herein. The Prayers and Tears of *Hannah* prevail'd more for a Blessing, than the costly Oblations of *Elkanah*, 1 Sam. 1. *Manasse's* Humiliation and Self-abasement gain'd him the favour of God, and restor'd him again to his lost Kingdom, 2 Chron. 33. 12, 13. *The tender and melting Heart of Josiah melted*



melted the Heart of God towards him, and preserv'd him from the Evil threaten'd in his days, *2 Kings 22. 19.* In the New Testament, the penitent Publican that *smote upon his breast,* and thought himself unworthy to lift up his eyes to Heaven, was graciously look'd upon, and rose the higher in God's esteem, for being so low in his own; *Luke 18. 13, 14.* The returning Prodigal, when he came to himself, and his Heart relented for his riotous living, counting himself unworthy to be call'd a Son, and praying to be rank'd among the hired Servants, was for this Brokenness of Spirit met and receiv'd by his Father with the kindest Kisses and Embraces, and entertain'd with all manner of Expressions of Joy; *Luke 15. 17,* and following Verses.

Thus we see that a broken Heart is the best of Sacrifices, and that a contrite Spirit is so far from being despis'd, that it will be cherish'd and comforted with the most reviving Cordials. For this reason, our Church appointed this Sentence to be read before we begin our Prayers, to let us know, that if we expect to have them answer'd and accepted, we must offer them up with humble and contrite Hearts: for *God looketh not, as Man looketh, upon the outward appearance, but he beholds the Heart;* *1 Sam. 16. 7.* He sees whether we come with a due Sense of our Sins and our Wants, and with earnest and hearty Desires to be reliev'd in both. These are the Persons that our Saviour invites to come to him with a Promise of Relief, saying, *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;* *Mat. 11. 28.* They that feel the weight and burden of their Sins, and earnestly long to be rid of it, will be welcome to him; and bringing such a bruise'd and troubled Spirit, shall be sure to find ease to their Souls.

But how may we get such a broken and contrite Heart? That's the next thing to be spoken to, and very well deserves to be consider'd. And in answer to it, I say, that this is the sole Gift and Work of God, and is only attainable by Prayer to him. He that made the Heart, is alone able to mollify it; and he that searches and tries the Heart, can only soften it. As for our selves, we may indeed harden our Hearts, but we can sooner crumble Mill-stones in pieces with our fingers, than work them to any remorse or tenderness: 'Tis only the Grace of God, and the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, that can do this work in us and for us; and therefore the Psalmist styles it a new Creation,



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saying, in the tenth Verse of this Chapter, *Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me. I know* (saith the Prophet *Jeremy*) *that the way of Man is not in himself, neither is it in him that walketh to direct his goings; Jer. 10. 23.* The Heart of Man hath naturally a stony quality, 'tis hard and inflexible, and (as the same Prophet tells us) *is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* Chap. 17. 9.

'Tis God only that can take this Stone out of the Heart, and change it into a Heart of Flesh; and this he hath promis'd to do for them that seek to him for it: *Ezek. 11. 19. I will give them a new Heart, and put a new Spirit within them; and I will take the stony Heart out of their Flesh, and will give them an Heart of Flesh: that is, I will remove from them that Hardness of Heart, by which it is so impenetrable that no good thing can enter it; and I will give them more soft and yielding Spirits, that are capable of the Impressions of Vertue, and more apt to be led by the Motions of the Divine Spirit: which is what is here call'd a broken and contrite Heart.*

Now because God is wont to work by Means, 'twill be requisite to enquire by what Means or Instruments he is wont to break and soften the Heart, and to make the Spirit of a Sinner to become thus contrite and tender. And they are;

(1.) His Holy Word and Sacraments. God Almighty compares his Word to a Hammer, and to Fire, by the one breaking, by the other melting a stony Heart. *Is not my Word like a Hammer, saith the Lord, that breaketh the Rock in pieces? Jer. 23. 29.* If the Heart be as hard as a Rock, here is a Hammer that can not only bruise, but break it in pieces. *Is not my Word like Fire?* saith he in the same Verse, *that can melt the stoutest Spirit: yes, it hath broken and melted many into Softness and Compliance. Saul was knock'd down to the earth by this Hammer, Acts 9. 4. and of a hard-hearted Persecutor, became a tender and compassionate Saint. The Word of the Lord melted the Heart of Josiah, so that it became tender and humble before the Lord, causing him to rent his Clothes, and to weep before him; 2 Kings 22. 19.* The Author to the Hebrews compares the Word of God to a two-edged Sword, that pierces even to the dividing asunder the Soul and the Spirit, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart; Heb. 4. 12. St. Peter's Sermon pricked many of his Hearers

to the heart, and fill'd them with a deep Remorse for their Sins; saying, *What shall we do?* Acts 2. 37. *Lydia's Heart* was open'd by the preaching of St Paul, so that she attended to his Instructions, Acts 16. 14. And many, by their own experience, have felt the blessed Influence of God's Word and Sacraments in softening their Hearts, and melting them into Sorrow and Contrition for their Iniquities. Again,

(2.) God melts the Hearts of Sinners sometimes by his Mercies and Loving-kindness. These work upon the Minds of ingenuous Natures, who are many times won by Favours, and drawn to their Duty by Acts of Kindness and Mercy. Thus when the Sinner hears of the Goodness of God, and considers the Riches of his Grace, the Sweetness of his Promises, the Multitude of his Compassions, and the Excellency of those things which he hath prepar'd for them that love him: this mollifies the Heart, and makes it willing to please, and loth to offend so gracious a God. Moreover,

(3.) God softens the Heart sometimes by sending Judgments and Afflictions: and this way he deals with the more sturdy and obdurate Offenders, who are too apt to despise the Goodness of God, to abuse his Mercy, and turn his Grace into Wantonness. Such as these he many times takes into his own hands, and lashes them with many repeated strokes of his Fury, till their Spirit come down, and they humble themselves before him. Thus he dealt with *Pharaoh*, whose Heart was harden'd to that degree, that the greatest Mercies and Favours could not work upon him, till God took the Rod into his hand, and scourg'd him with sundry Plagues and Judgments; which pull'd down the Haughtiness of his Spirit, and made him cry unto God for Mercy. *When thy Judgments are in the World* (saith the Prophet *Isaiah*) *the Inhabitants of the Earth will learn Righteousness.* These make them sensible of their evil ways, and turn them to God, from whom they have departed. The Tribulation of *Manasseh* tended much to his Humiliation; and *David's* Troubles reduc'd him to a sound Mind and a troubled Spirit, which made him say, *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learnt thy Statutes;* and by that means to acknowledge, that 'twas good for him to be afflicted.

These are the ordinary ways and means of God's breaking the Heart, and making the Spirit humble and contrite.



But how may we preserve such a broken and contrite Spirit? Why, by the same means and method it was procur'd. If the Word of God be the Hammer to break and soften our Hearts, we must keep our selves under the strokes and impressions of it, otherwise they will return to their former hardness: and indeed nothing more hardens Mens Hearts, than the Neglect of God's holy Will and Commandments. If his Word be the Fire to melt us into Contrition, we must keep our Hearts under the warmth of it; otherwise, like Water taken from the Fire, they will return to their natural Coldness; and we daily see they do so.

If Love and Kindness be apt to work upon us, as they certainly will upon all good Natures, we should keep up the constant Remembrance of them. And lastly, if the Terrors of Wrath and Judgments be more likely to prevail and make impression upon us, we should hear the Voice of the Rod; and him that appointed it, and learn by the smart of it to turn to him that smites us.

Thus we see what is meant by a broken Heart and contrite Spirit; how acceptable it is to God, above all other Sacrifices; and likewise how it may be best gotten and kept by us.

It remains that we all enter into and examine our own Hearts, and see whether we find or feel that Brokenness, Tenderness, and Contrition of Spirit, which is so pleasing unto God, and without which no other Services are of any value or esteem with him. To know this, see,

First, Whether you find your Mind touch'd with a Sense and Sorrow for past Offences, together with hearty Desires and Endeavours to watch against future Miscarriages.

Next observe, how you stand affected towards God; that is, whether you delight in his Promises, tremble at his Threats, and incline to obey his Precepts. And,

Lastly, How you are affected towards others; whether you pity and lament their Failings, and are touch'd with a Feeling and Compassion for their Infirmities.

These are the Marks and Tokens of a broken Spirit, and are ever in some measure found where it is. And if you feel these Symptoms within you, be of good comfort, God will not despise such a broken Heart, but will cherish and delight in it; he will heal the Sores thereof, and bind up all its Wounds. But if you find these things wanting



in you, labour and strive, and give your selves no rest, till you have wrought your Hearts to a greater Tenderness. To which end, give your diligent attendance on the Ministry of God's Word, which you see is the Hammer to break a hard Heart, and the Fire to melt an obdurate Spirit: and because 'tis God only that can mollify and change the Heart, pray frequently with holy David, *Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me.* So shall we meet at last with the Saints in Heaven, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect.

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## DISCOURSE VI.

JOEL II. 13.

*Render your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*

**T**HIS is the next Sentence prescrib'd to usher in our Prayers, and is chiefly suited to Days of Fasting and Humiliation, as appears by the foregoing Verse; *Thus saith the Lord, Turn ye unto me with all your heart, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.* Which Words are generally order'd to be read on those occasions.

In the preceding Sentence, the Psalmist shew'd us the Acceptableness of a broken and contrite Heart, how far it exceeds all other Sacrifices, which are of no value or avail without it. And therefore our Church hath wisely subjoin'd to that, this Exhortation of the Prophet Joel: *Render your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, &c.* In which words we may observe,

*First, A Call to Repentance, Turn ye to the Lord your God.*

*Secondly, The Manner of shewing it, and that is, by rending the Heart, and not the Garments; or, rather than the Garments.*

*Thirdly,*

Thirdly, A strong Motive and Encouragement thereunto, taken from the Nature and Properties of God: For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and repenteth him of the evil. Of each of these briefly, and particularly.

And, First, I must begin with the Call to Repentance, in those words, *Turn ye unto the Lord your God*: Which is a Summons to return unto God, from whom they had departed, either by turning to Idols, to Mammon, or their own wicked Inventions; for Returning evermore supposes a Revolt, and none will think of returning, till they are sensible they are going or doing amiss. Indeed, the first Transgression put all Mankind out of the way, and the whole Posterity of Adam have gone astray ever since. This Root of Bitterness hath yielded nothing but bad Fruit, and our Fathers eating of sour Grapes hath set the Childrens teeth on edge ever since: From hence proceeded that original Corruption and Depravation of Nature, which daily breaks forth in many actual Transgressions, by which we become backward to all that is good, and prone to all manner of Evil, as we all find and feel by sad experience. Thus hath Sin clap'd a wrong byass upon the Soul, that hath carry'd it away from God, and made it walk in ways directly contrary to him, by which we become Aliens and Enemies to him by wicked Works. Now Repentance is the Grace that reduces and brings us back to God, from whom we went astray; and leads us into the right Path, from which we have swerv'd. This is here call'd *a turning to the Lord our God*; which implies a turning from Sin, which draws us from him; and a turning to Righteousness, which brings us to him. And this the Prophet Joel here tells us must be with all the Heart; not dividing it between God and Mammon, but giving it whole and entire unto him: *with weeping*, for our Folly in forsaking him; *with fasting*, for our former Luxury and Excesses; and *with mourning*, for our frequent Failings and Aberrations.

This is what we are here, and in other places of Scripture call'd to: O Israel (saith God by the Prophet Jeremy) *if thou wilt return, return unto me; and if thou wilt put away thine Abominations out of my sight, thou shalt not be remov'd*; Chap. 4. 1. And in the Prophet Hosea, we find them calling upon one another, saying, *Come and let us return*



return unto the Lord, for he hath said, and he will heal and he hath said, and he will bind us up, Chap. 6. 1. Of this our Church puts us in mind, that the entrance upon our Prayers; for Repentance will open the Ears of God to your Petitions; but Impenitence will shut them close against us.

But how are we to express this our turning unto God? Why! that the Second Thing propounded will tell us; and that is, by rending the *Heart*, and not the *Garments*. For the better understanding of this, we must know that 'twas the Custom in old times, on days of Mourning, to rend their Clothes, to tear their Hair, and to thite on their Breasts, with other external Signs of inward Sorrow and Compunction; and this Practice was grounded on some Precepts of God Almighty for that purpose. Hence we read of *David*, that upon the News of his Son *Abishalom's* killing the Sons of *Amnon*, he rent his Garments, and lay on the Earth, and all his Servants stood by him, their Clothes rent, 2 Sam. 13. 19. And 'tis said of *Job's* Friends, that, in token of Grief, they lifted their Voices, and wept, and rent every one their Mantle, and sprinkled Dust upon their Heads towards Heaven, Job 2. 12. And, upon hearing the Iniquities of the People, rent his Garments, and his Mantle, and plucked off the Hair of his Head, and of his Beard, and sat down in the Ashes, Chap. 9. 3, 5. And the Prophet *Jeremy* upbraids both the Prince and People, that upon hearing of God's Displeasure against them, they were not afraid, nor rent their Garments, neither the King, nor any of his Servants, that heard all these words, Jer. 36. 24. By all which it appears to be the Practice of those times to rend their Clothes, and to use other outward Signs of Sorrow, when any grievous thing hung over their Heads, or happen'd unto them.

Now the Prophet here bids them not to rest in these outward Signs and Ceremonies of Sorrow, nor rely upon any external Rites of Mourning, but to look more to the breaking of the Heart, than tearing the Hair, or rending the Clothes: for Godly Sorrow consists not in rent and ragged Apparel, but in a bruised and broken Spirit; not in wearing Sackcloth, or spreading Ashes under us, but in having on Christ's Righteousness, and appearing in his Garb of Humility. This is the best Attire we can put on; and therefore St. Peter wills us, not to be clad in Rags, but



but to be cloth'd with Humility; 1 Pet. 5. 5. The rending of the Garment, was an Emblem of a Heart torn with Sorrow, and was one of the highest Expressions of the greatest Grief; for which reason it was order'd by the Jewish Doctors, not to be us'd but upon the Death of Parents or Princes, or in some great and common Calamity; the use whereof was to stir up within us the greater Hatred and Detestation of Sin, the sole Cause and Occasion of all our Troubles. So that this alone was not sufficient; for the rending of the Garments was, in God's sight, no better than Hypocrisy; without that inward Sorrow and Contrition of Heart, which it was design'd to represent; and God knew it was then but too much counterfeited. *Rend therefore your Hearts.* (saith the Prophet) *and not your Garments,* that is, rather than your Garments, for so the Expression imports; not that God wholly dislik'd the Ceremony, but that he prefer'd the thing signify'd before it, and would have the former omitted rather than the latter. In short, the Sense of it is, *Rend not your Garments only, but your Hearts also;* and let your principal Care be about this; without which the other will be of no avail. Think not to please God with a Penance that is only Skin-deep, or goes no farther than the Borders of your Garment; it must pierce deeper, and reach the Heart, before it can find any Acceptance. And by thus turning unto God, he will turn unto us, and receive us into the Arms of his Mercy. And this will lead me;

Thirdly, To the strong Motive and Encouragement annex'd hereunto, taken from the Nature and Properties of God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil. All which glorious Attributes and Perfections are so many powerful Arguments and Attractives to draw us to him. When the Lord proclaim'd his Name to the Israelites, to ingage them to turn to him, he declar'd himself to be the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression and Sin, Exod. 34. 5, 6. And the Prophet here repeats the same Attributes which God there describes himself by: And what greater Encouragement can we have to go to him, than an assurance of a hearty Welcome to so courteous an Inviter?

Now

Now tho the several Expressions, in both places, signify in general God's infinite Goodness to all poor relenting Sinners; yet because they imply the different Acts and Degrees of it, they will deserve to be distinctly and particularly consider'd. And,

1. God is said to be *gracious*, that is, prompt and ready to do good; not a stern, sour or severe Being, that keeps others at a distance from him, but free of Access, and easy to be intreated, willing to shew Favour, and more inclin'd to give than we are to ask, desirous to impart his Grace, and willing upon reasonable Terms to make us happy. To this appertaineth that of the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 55. 7. *Let the Wicked forsake his Ways, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and return unto the Lord, for he will shew Favour unto him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

2. God is said to be *merciful*; that is, full of Compassion and Pity, to all that are in any Misery or Trouble; he hath Bowels of Mercy (as the word signifies in the Original) which are continually yearning towards returning Sinners. The Expression alludes to the Bowels of a Father, and signifies that natural Affection that Parents bear towards their Children. This is set forth by *David*, Psal. 103. 13. *Like as a Father pitieth his own Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he considereth of what they are made, and remembreth that they are but Dust. Can a Mother forget her Child (saith the Prophet Isaiah) or have no Compassion upon the Fruit of her Womb? yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee, saith the Lord, Isa. 49. 15. And our Saviour assures us, that as earthly Parents are willing to give good Gifts to their Children, so our heavenly Father is far more willing to give good things to them that ask them.* All which is written, to satisfy us of God's infinite Mercy and Compassion to all penitent Offenders.

3. God is farther said, to be *slow to Anger*; that is, long-suffering, and not easily provok'd: He doth not, like frail weak Man, presently break out into Rage and Fury, or suffer his Passion to overcome his Reason; but he bears long with Sinners, and will not suddenly suffer his whole Displeasure to arise. He is not forward to punish, nor doth he willingly grieve the Children of Men; but he is inclin'd to forbear, and expect Amendment, and even waits to be gracious: he makes all favourable Allowances, and gives



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gives frequent Warnings before he strikes, that Men may prevent or avert the Blow. And when their Iniquities force him to punish, his very Bowels turn within him, saying, as he did of Ephraim and Judah: *O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? O Judah! what shall I do unto thee? And how shall I give thee up, O Ephraim! my Bowels even turn within me,* Hos. 6. 4. Again.

4. He is here said to be of great Kindness; that is, he is an overflowing Fountain of Goodness, that never fails; or a bottomless Well of Mercy, that is never exhausted or drawn dry: he is kind not only to all his Creatures, whom he made to display his Goodness, but even to those that have offended him, on whom he is driven to exercise his Justice; he shews his Kindness in using the Rod, and in the midst of Judgment remembers Mercy; he is easily pacify'd, and ever ready to be reconcil'd; he is inclin'd to pardon, and more desirous to spare than to punish.

Lastly, 'Tis here said, that he repenteth him of the Evil, that is, he removes or revokes the Punishment he had threaten'd, when he seeth Men to repent, amend and turn to him. So we find he did in the case of the Ninevites, against whom he had threaten'd Destruction, saying, *In forty days shall Nineveh be destroy'd*; but when he saw their Works, and how they turn'd every one from their evil ways, God turn'd too from his fierce Anger, and repented of the Evil he had said he would do unto them, and did it not, Jonah 3. 10. Not that there is thereby any Change made in God, but because they chang'd from the worse to better, he is likewise said to change the Course he threaten'd, but not his Mind, which was ever to punish the Obstinate, and to spare the Penitent. Indeed God cannot be properly said to repent, for that supposes the knowledg of something after, which he was ignorant of before, and a Change of Mind ensuing thereupon, both which imply such Weakness and Imperfection, as may not be thought or affirm'd of God, who is both omniscient and unchangeable. When therefore Repenting is at any time ascrib'd to him, it must be understood as spoken after the manner of Men, that we may be the better mov'd and affected towards him, by what we find and feel within our selves; because when we alter from a thing which we before resolv'd on, we are said to repent of it: therefore when God desists from any Evil which he before threaten'd, he is likewise said to repent of it; which thing implies



plies indeed a Change in us, who are mutable and subject to change, but none in him who is unchangeable; and is therefore only figuratively and improperly ascrib'd to him.

Upon the whole, these Attributes and Properties of God Almighty, are here mention'd as so many Engagements to turn unto him; and indeed they carry such strong Obligations, as are sufficient to melt our Hearts, and break them into Sorrow and Contrition for all things, wherein we have offended him or done amiss.

Thus we see both the Duty of the Text, and the Encouragement annex'd to the Performance of it: the Use of it will lie in the following Lessons.

And, 1<sup>st</sup>. From the Precept of *rending the Heart, and not the Garments only*, we may learn not to rest in the outward Signs and Tokens of Repentance and Humiliation; but to carry them farther, and mind chiefly the Duty represented by them. The tearing of the Hair, the rending of Clothes, and the wearing of Sackcloth, were seeming and severe Marks of Sorrow; and yet all this may be without any inward Sorrow and Contrition of Heart: and where it is so, it will find no favour or regard with God, who looks for Truth in the inner Parts. The Pharisees disfiguring their Faces, to appear unto Men to fast, was no better than Hypocrisy in God's sight; and all external Rites of mourning for Sin will prove no better, where the Heart is untouch'd. Our Saviour tells us, that 'tis not the saying, *Lord, Lord*, or pouring out many Prayers, but the *doing the Will of his Father*, that will give us an entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven: And that *many will say unto him, in the last day, Lord! Lord! have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works?* who yet shall be bid to depart from him as *Workers of Iniquity*. Let us not then rely upon any outward Duties or Privileges, such as hearing of God's Word, receiving the holy Sacraments, and the like; which tho' good means of Salvation, yet are not sufficient of themselves to bring us to it: nor let us depend upon Tears, Sighs and Groans, and other external Marks of Grief, to wash away our Guilt, and atone for our Transgressions. But let us look more to the Dispositions of the Heart, than the Postures of the Body, and rather afflict the Soul, than rend the Garments; otherwise we deceive

ceive our selves, by dealing deceitfully with God and Men. Torn Clothes will be of no use without a broken Heart; and therefore let us take the Prophet's Counsel, to mend the Heart, and not the Garments. And,

2ly. Let us in good earnest turn unto the Lord our God, from whom we have, by our manifold Transgressions, gone astray: Let us turn from all things that are irksome and displeasing to him, and forsake all our Errors both in Opinion and Practice: Let us mortify the whole Body of Sin, with all the Motives, Occasions and Temptations thereunto, and turn unto God with the whole Man, *loving him with all the Heart, and with all the Soul, and with all the Mind, and with all the Strength*; and so leave nothing of either for the World, or the Lusts of the Flesh, which too often withdraw and lead us away from him. And because we cannot come unto God of our selves, let us beg the Assistance of his Grace to draw us to him. Let us come to him by his Son, who hath declar'd himself, *the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that none cometh to the Father but by him*, John 14. He is willing to reach out his Hand to help us, if we are inclin'd to come to him; and therefore let us no longer hang back, but turn heartily and speedily to him, who is ready to receive us.

Lastly, From the Prophet's declaring the Nature and Properties of God Almighty, that *he is gracious and merciful*, &c. let us learn to have and keep in our Minds such true Apprehensions of him; for according to the notions we entertain of his Nature and Will, such will our Service and Carriage towards him be. If we take him for a sour, severe and tyrannical Being, that delights in the Miseries and Destruction of his Creatures, all our Service to him will be slavish and superstitious; and instead of turning to him, we shall labour all we can to flee and turn away from him: But if we take him rightly as he is, a God gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, unwilling to punish, and ready to pardon, the Service we pay him will be chearful and ingenuous; we shall be desirous to please him, and unwilling to offend him; and instead of shunning, shall be ever ready to have recourse to him: He will be then thought to be what he indeed is, our true Friend and Benefactor, and our only Refuge in time of Trouble; and that will upon all occasions invite and draw us to him, it will always lead us to the Throne of Grace, where we may be sure to find



find Grace to help in time of need : Which that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, &c.

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## DISCOURSE VII.

DANIEL IX. 9, 10.

*To the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, tho we have rebel'd against him ; neither have we obey'd the Voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his Laws, which he set before us.*

**I**N the foregoing Sentence, the Prophet Joel encourag'd Sinners to turn unto God by Prayer and Repentance, from his inclination to receive and pardon them ; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil.

In this Sentence the Prophet Daniel raises the Spirits of some desponding Sinners, who fear they have out-sinn'd the measures of Mercy, and turn'd the Kindness of God into Fury and Indignation. To comfort these, he lets them know, that God is an inexhaustible Fountain of Mercy, which Sin cannot stop the Current of, nor Iniquity draw dry ; for to him belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, tho we have rebel'd against him, &c. The Prophet, in the foregoing Verse, had directed us to take to our selves all the blame and shame of our Iniquities, saying, *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our Kings, to our Princes, to our Fathers, because we have sinn'd against thee.* The People of the Jews were at this time carry'd Captive into *Babylon* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, where they underwent sore and heavy Calamities. In this deplorable case Daniel prays and intercedes with God for them ; and the better to prevail, acknowledg'd that they had all sinn'd, from the least to the greatest ; and casts the guilt and shame of their Transgressions upon them all, from the highest to the lowest ; owning, that they had justly deserv'd all that was come upon them : *And to us* (saith he)



*belongeth nothing but shame and confusion of face.* But then to clear God Almighty, and create the greater confidence in him, he adds the words of our Text, *To the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, tho we have rebel'd against him, &c.* where there are many Cordials and comfortable Considerations to excite our Devotion, and to keep us from fainting in the greatest Extremities; of which our Church here minds us, when we enter upon our Prayers. He is here stil'd, *The Lord*, that hath the power and the care of us: He is the *Lord God*, that made and preserves us: He is the *Lord our God*, in covenant with us, that redeem'd and sanctifies us: He is our God, and we are his People, and therefore he will surely save us; for *to this Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgivenesses*: these belong to him as the Perfections of his Nature, and the Properties of his Being; they are the distinguishing Marks and Characters, by which he makes himself known to us, and would be represented by. And these are so essential and inherent in him, that no Faults or Follies of ours can alter or hinder the gracious Effects of them; for he continues the same to us, *tho we have rebel'd against him, neither have we obey'd his Voice, to walk in his Laws, which he set before us.* In the Words we may learn,

- I. That 'tis the Royal Prerogative of God Almighty to shew Mercy and to forgive Sins; *To the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgivenesses.*
- II. That God's pardoning Grace and Mercy are free and undeserv'd; for they are extended to us, *tho we have rebel'd against him.*
- III. That a Sense of our Unworthiness and Disobedience is necessary to obtain the benefit of his Mercy and Pardon: This we learn from the Prophet's Confession in the last words, *Neither have we obey'd the Voice of the Lord, to walk in his Ways, which he hath set before us.* Of these in their order: And,

I. Our Text teaches us, That 'tis the Royal Prerogative of God Almighty to shew Mercy and forgive Sins; for *to him belong Mercies and Forgivenesses*: which Words imply these two things;

1st. That 'tis the sole Power and Property of God to have Mercy and to forgive.

2ly. That

24y. That 'tis his Will and Inclination upon all occasions to do both.

For the 1st, The Word of God puts the pardon of Sin wholly and solely in his power; 'tis his peculiar Right and Title, it belongs to him, and to none else: And therefore when God proclaim'd his Name to the *Israelites*, we find this in full and express Terms inserted; for he styles himself, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression and Sin*: This is his Name for ever, and this is his Memorial unto all Generations. *To him belong Mercies and Forgivenesses*; Mercies of all sorts belong to him as the Property of his Nature, and Forgivenesses of all kinds of Sin, against God, our Neighbour and our selves, belong to him as the Appendix of his Sovereignty: *I, even I, am he that blots out thy Transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy Sins*; saith God by the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 43. 25. God can blot out Iniquities, and 'tis only he that can do it. The Offence being wholly against him, he only can pardon or pass it by: *Against thee have I sinned*, saith *David*; and therefore prays God to *hide his Face from his Sins*, that they might never appear against him; and to *blot out his Iniquities*, and then they would be remember'd no more. God alone can remove Guilt from the Soul, and subdue the Power of Sin, and consequently 'tis he alone can forgive and do it away: they are his Laws that are broken, his Will that is oppos'd, and his Authority that is violated in all our Transgressions; and therefore he who is the only Supreme *Lawgiver*, that is able to *save and to destroy*, can alone remit or grant the Pardon. *Who can forgive Sin save God only?* said the Scribes and Pharisees to our blessed Saviour, whom they accus'd of Blasphemy, for saying to the Sick of the Palsy, *thy Sins be forgiven thee*, Mark 2. 6, 7. where they own it to be the sole Prerogative of God to pardon Sin; but not knowing Christ to be so, they charg'd him for a Blasphemer for pretending to it, till by many Acts of his Divine Power he convinc'd them of his being the Son of God, and so had power to forgive Sin, as we read in that Chapter. 'Tis not in the power of Men or Angels to blot out the least Transgression; they cannot satisfy for, nor take off the stain of the least Offence: the Pope's Pardon and Indulgencies have no force or efficacy that



way; nor is it the Virgin *Mary's* Milk, but *Christ's* Blood, that can wash away the Pollution of it.

'Tis easy indeed to run upon the score, to treasure up Wrath, and to wound the Conscience; but 'tis God alone that can blot out Iniquities, atone the Guilt, and heal the Sores of a wounded Spirit: *To the Lord our God belong such Mercies and Forgivenesses.*

But the Prophet makes use of these words here, not so much to shew the Power and peculiar Right, as the Willingness and Readiness of God Almighty to Pardon and Forgiveness; and that this belongs to him not only as the Prerogative of his Sovereignty, but as the Property and Propensity of his Nature: and accordingly our Church prescribes them to be read here, as a Motive to Devotion, and an Encouragement to make our Addresses to him, who is both able and willing to grant our Petitions. And lest any should despair of Mercy from the number and greatness of his Sins, 'tis added, *To the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, tho we have rebel'd against him.* And,

This will lead me to the Second Thing propounded, which was to shew, That God's pardoning Mercy is free and undeserv'd; for he is here said to extend it to Sinners, tho they have rebel'd against him. Some Translations read the words, not *tho*, but *because we have rebel'd against him*; to signify, that our Sins are not so much a hindrance, as a motive to his Compassion; and that he is willing, upon our Humiliation, to take occasion from thence to shew favour unto us. The rebelling against God here hinted at, was the *Israelites* falling into Idolatry, whereby they forsook the true God, and serv'd them that were no Gods; which was too heinous a Sin to deserve any Mercy. But still the Prophet declares him to be the Father and Fountain of Mercy, and so there were still hopes of Pardon; *for to him belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, tho they had rebel'd against him.* And still all Sin is indeed rebelling against God; for 'tis a resisting his Will, and bidding an open Defiance to the Authority of his Laws, which cannot but be highly displeasing and provoking to him: And yet still his Inclinations to Mercy are such, that he is more ready to receive, than we can be to return to him, and is more forward to grant a Pardon, than we are to ask it. Neither the multitude nor the heinousness



nousness of our Sins can alter his Nature, or obstruct the Influences of his free Grace. *David* makes use of this, rather as an Argument for, than a Discouragement from asking pardon, *Psal. 25. 11. For thy Name sake, O Lord, pardon mine Iniquity, for it is great.* He asks it not for his own sake, or for any merits of his; but for *the Lord's own Name sake*: it being a principal part of his Name, to be gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive. These are the Attributes of God, wherein he chiefly delighted; they are inseparably annex'd to his Essence, in which the Sins of Mankind, tho ever so heinous, can make no Change: and therefore the *Psalmist* pleads here not his own Worth, but his own Want, as a Motive of Compassion; and urges not the Smallness, but the Greatness of his Sin, as an Argument for Mercy: "For thy Name sake, O Lord, be merciful unto my Sin, for it is great." *Daniel* being afflicted for the Miseries of the *Jews* in their Captivity, and knowing their Provocations, could not tell how better to intercede for them, than by fetching his Argument from the Name and Nature of God, saying, *To the Lord belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, tho we have rebelled against him*: meaning, that he is full of Mercy and Goodness to his Creatures; and where Sin abounded, there his Grace did much more abound. This abundant Goodness and Freeness of Divine Grace is by the Prophet *Isaiah* set forth in divers places of his Prophecy.

In the first Chapter, after he had enumerated and aggravated the many and great Transgressions of the rebellious *Israelites*, and shew'd that God was more provok'd than pacify'd by all the Sacrifices and Oblations they brought to him; he brings in the Almighty thus bespeaking them: *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; tho your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; tho they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wooll*; ver. 16, 18. Scarlet and Crimson are Colours of the deepest dye, and carry with them the Tincture of Blood, and serve to represent the crying and heinous Guilt of their Abominations; whereas White is the freest from all mixture, and is the Colour of Innocence. So that the Comparison teaches us, that whatever Aggravations our Sins may have to enhance their Guilt; yet upon true Repentance they shall be all done away, and be as if they had never been. Again,

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The same Prophet brings in God Almighty saying to the same purpose, in that fore-cited place, *Iſa. 43. 25. I, even I am he, that blotteth out thine Iniquities, and will remember thy Sins no more.* Where, if we observe the Connection, or what went immediately before, we may well enough wonder how such kind words should so soon follow. In the foregoing Verse, God complain'd that they had been at no care nor cost in his Service; for *they bought no sweet Cane with Money, nor filled him with the fat of their Sacrifices*; but instead of that, *made him to serve with their Sins, and wearied him with their Iniquities.* And yet the very next words are, *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thine Iniquities for my own sake, and will not remember thy Sins.* Who could have expected such kind Expressions after so great Provocations? One would have thought (as one hath elegantly descanted on those words) it should have been, *I, even I am he, that will punish thine Offences, and be aveng'd for thine Iniquities: Thou hast made me to serve with thy Sins, and I will make thee to serve with my Plagues: Thou hast wearied me with thine Iniquities, and I will weary thee with my Judgments.* This, Justice seem'd to require, and might be reasonably look'd for; but instead of that, the Style runs quite otherwise: *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thine Iniquities. Thou hast made me to serve with thy Sins, and I'll make thee a Servant to my self: Thou hast wearied me with thy Transgressions, and I will load thee with my Mercies: Thou hast not remember'd my Covenant, and I will not remember thy Sins:* Tho I might dip my Pen in Gall, and write bitter things against thee, yet I will dip it in the Blood of my Son, and with one dash blot out all thine Iniquities. What surprizing and astonishing Loving-kindness is this! And yet this is what God himself declares to the rebellious *Israelites.*

And to shew the Freeness and Undeservedness of all this, he is pleas'd to add, *I will do all this for mine own sake, or for my Name sake.* 'Tis not for our sake, or for any deserts of ours, but merely out of his own goodness, and propensity to shew mercy. So he tells us himself, *Ezek. 36. 22. I do not this for your sake, saith the Lord God; but for my holy Name sake, which ye have profan'd among the Heathen.* He does it to make good his own Name and Title, and to shew that he is what he declar'd himself to be, *a God gracious and merciful, forgiving Iniquity, Trans-*  
gressions



*gression and Sin.* In a word, he does it for his Honour's sake, lest the Heathen should triumph, and say, *Where is now your God?* So that well might the Prophet *Daniel* here say, *To the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, tho we have rebelled against him.*

But here we must note, that all this is written, not that we should presume upon Mercy, whilst we wilfully persist in any sinful Courses against God; but that we should not despair of his Favour in returning to him. *Shall we sin* (saith the Apostle) *because Grace hath abounded?* No, *God forbid*, saith he; that would be to make a very bad use of all his Loving-kindness, and to turn it into Wrath and Fury. The true Intent of his Mercy is to engage and encourage us by Prayer and Penitence to come to him, and not to suffer the number or greatness of our Sins to drive us to despair, or to draw us from him; but to say with the Disciples, *Lord, whither should we go? thou only hast the words of eternal Life.* And this will lead me,

In the last place, to the Qualification requisite to obtain God's Mercy and Pardon; and that is, a due Sense and Acknowledgment of our Sins: so *Daniel* here teaches us to say, *We have rebell'd against him, neither have we obey'd the Voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his Laws, which he set before us.* Where we are directed to own our selves Rebels and Traitors unto God, before we can get our Pardon; to bewail our Disobedience, in despising his Calls, and breaking his Laws, which he hath given us to walk by. Such Confession and Contrition is necessary to make us capable of Mercy; for without these 'tis a vain presumption to expect it, and with them we need not to despond or doubt of his Favour.

Thus I have open'd to you the great Motive in the Text to lead us unto God, taken from his Prerogative to pardon, and the Propensity of his Nature to shew mercy: *To him belong Mercies and Forgivenesses*, both in the plural number; not this or that Mercy only, but Mercies of all kinds: and he forgives not one single Sin and no more, but all sorts of Sins. He wipes out the whole score, that none of them may remain or appear against us. He wrote his Law indeed in Stone, that it might still remain, but he writes our Breaches of it in the Dust, that they may be easily defac'd. *God is Love* (saith the Apostle) and that, we know,



is hardly provok'd and easily reconcil'd. He is more ready to offer Mercy, than we are to receive it; and he writes not our Sins in so deep a Character, but they may be easily blotted. And all this he doth freely and undeservedly for his own Name; yea, tho we have deserv'd the quite contrary, by rebelling against him, and disobeying the Laws he set before us.

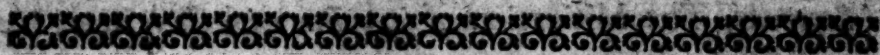
But still we must not forget, that tho God's Grace be free in respect of any Merits or Deserts in us; yet it is not so absolutely free, as to exclude all Conditions on our part; something, you see, is requir'd of us to qualify and dispose us to receive it; we must be humble, sensible, and sorry for our Sins, tho we cannot satisfy for them. Otherwise his Grace is free in another sense too, that is, God is as free to withdraw as to give it, and may take it away when he pleaseth. Wherefore to draw to a conclusion, let us from this Discourse learn,

First, Not to abuse the Grace of God, nor draw evil Consequences from so sweet and comfortable a Truth. Beware especially of turning the Grace of God into Wantonness, knowing that abus'd Grace turns to Fury, and will in the end draw on a deeper Damnation. Let us not presume upon Mercy, whilst we continue in our Sins; for that is to affront the Goodness of God, and to despise the Riches of his Grace and Favour. Nor let us despair of Mercy in our addressing to him; for that is to deny his Goodness, and disbelieve the Truth of all his Promises; both which are gross Abuses of his Loving-kindness. And therefore,

Lastly, Let us learn from hence to make a right use of God's Mercies and Forgivenesses; which is, to be encourag'd to a more chearful performance of our Duty, and to be won by them to better Obedience. This is to be drawn by the Cords of Love, which is much more pleasing, than to be driven by the Terrors of the Rod, and to be aw'd into our Duty by the fear of the Lash. In short, let us not be afraid to go to so gracious a God, who is willing to receive us into the arms of his Mercy, for to him belong Mercies and Forgivenesses.

I shall conclude all with that pious and pertinent Prayer of our Church: *O God, whose Nature and Property is ever to have mercy and to forgive, receive our humble Petitions; and tho we be tied and bound with the Chain of our Sins, yet*

*let the Pitifulness of thy great Mercy loose us, for the Honour of Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.*



## DISCOURSE VIII.

JEREM. X. 24.

*O Lord, correct me, but with Judgment, not in thine Anger; lest thou bring me to nothing.*

**T**HIS is another Sentence of Holy Scripture, suited more especially to Seasons of Fasting and Humiliation; and is therefore commonly appointed to prepare our Mind, and begin our Devotion on these solemn Occasions.

The words are a Prayer of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, who having in the foregoing part of the Chapter declar'd the Glory and Greatness of God, above all the Idols and Vanities of the Heathens, resolves to cast himself wholly upon the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of his Maker; and from a Sense of his own Ignorance and Inability to advise himself, refers all his matters to him, saying in the Verse before the Text, *O Lord, I know the way of Man is not in himself; it is not in Man that walketh, to direct his steps*: meaning, that we are not wise enough of our selves to govern or guide us aright. We know not many times what is best for us, but are apt to be too partial to our selves, to our own prejudice; wishing for Prosperity, when it might do us harm; and deprecating Adversity, when it may be most for our good. And therefore that we may not perish thro our own Fondness, or be ruin'd by sparing the Rod, he teaches us to say in the words of the Text; *Correct me, O Lord, but with Judgment, not in thine Anger; lest thou bring me to nothing*. Where he rather prays for, than against Afflictions, but yet with such Reservations of Mercy, that he may be able to bear, and not be overcome or overwhelm'd by them. In the Words then we may observe,

*First,*

*First, A Petition for temporal Chastisement; Correct me, O Lord.*

*Secondly, The Mitigation of it; But with Judgment, not in thine Anger.*

*Thirdly, The Ground or Reason of both; Lest thou bring me to nothing.*

Each of these will afford us matter worth our serious Thoughts and Consideration. And I begin with the

*First, Which is a Petition for temporal Chastisement; Correct me, O Lord.* In speaking to this, 'twill be requisite to enquire, whether it may be a Duty at any time to desire God to correct us? That we ought at all times to take in good part the Chastisements of the Lord, and patiently to bear any Affliction that he shall be pleas'd to lay upon us, is unquestionably our Duty and our Discretion too; both the Precepts and Examples of Holy Scripture may abundantly clear and satisfy us in that point: But whether we may call for Correction, or by any Act or Request of our own bring it upon us, is matter of doubt, and seems not so consonant to the Principles either of Reason or Religion. For since *no Chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous*, and all Sufferings are against the grain of Nature, and the great Rule of Self-preservation; it cannot but seem harsh and unnatural to Flesh and Blood, to desire what is so irksome and grievous to it. And this Difficulty is the more increas'd, because Good is the proper Object of Desire; and the Cry of all Mankind is, *Who will shew us any Good?* Whereas Evil, especially that of Suffering, is the general Object of Hatred and Aversion, and all Men naturally strive to shun and avoid it.

And yet we find the Prophet here petitioning for the Rod, and desiring God to use it against him; saying, *O Lord, correct me.* In answer to this, I say,

*1st,* That there are some things absolutely good in themselves, and desirable for their own intrinsic Worth and Goodness: such are Vertue and Holiness, and all the good things of the next Life. And there are other things only relatively good, as they serve to some good end, and are desirable only as they tend to promote it: such are the Troubles, Crosses and Afflictions of this Life; which have no Desirableness in them of themselves, being the Burdens  
and



and Grievances of Nature, and are to be desir'd only as they tend to some good end, as we shall see after. Again,

2dly, Good and Evil are either really so in their own Nature, or only apparently so in the Mind or Imagination. Now both these are the Objects of Desire or Aversion, not as they are in themselves, but as they stand related and represented to the Mind. A thing really evil, if apprehended or taken for good, shall be as much the Object of Love and Desire, as a real Good; and a thing really good, if it be thought and apprehended as evil, shall be as much the Object of Hatred and Aversion, as a real Evil. For as we shun with eagerness what we judg hurtful to us, so we pursue with delight what we think good and beneficial for us. And because the main Mistake about Prosperity and Adversity lies here, it will be requisite to rectify and remove it.

To which end, I say, 3dly, That Prosperity may sometimes prove a greater prejudice than Blessing, which hath made good Men sometimes to pray against it: for a constant uninterrupted Course of Prosperity is too apt to make Men forget God, and themselves too; it causes them to grow proud and presumptuous, to run into all Excess of Riot, and to commit all Uncleaness with greediness. David in his Prosperity said he should never be moved, and thought his Mountain to stand so strong, that it could not be shaken; and so became too confident of his own Strength, as he himself confesses, *Psal. 30. 6, 7.* Continual Ease and Plenty make Men wanton, and prone to kick against God: *Jesurun waxed fat and kicked*, and that caus'd him to forget the God that made him, and lightly esteem the Rock of his Salvation; *Deut. 32. 15.* The Prosperity of the Wicked was the cause (as the Psalmist tells us) *why they were so holden with Pride, and overwhelm'd with Cruelty*: for this glues their Hearts to this World, and will not suffer them to think or prepare for a better; which must greatly endanger their future and eternal Felicity. For which reason, we find *Agar* praying against Riches; *Lest I be full* (saith he) *and deny God, and say who is the Lord?* *Prov. 30. 9.* *Solomon* speaks of Riches sometimes given to the hurt of the Owners; not that they are so in themselves, or were design'd so by the Giver of them, but they accidentally prove so, by the bad use that too many make of them; their corrupt Nature turning the Encouragements of Vertue into the Incentives to Vice, by which means

means they oft-times become the Bane both of Body and Soul. Indeed 'tis not easy to manage or digest great Prosperity, which too often corrupts both Mind and Manners; Great Estates, like enormous Rudders, rather sink than steer the Vessel; and more have been destroy'd, than made happy, by great Abundance. Besides,

'Tis a sad Condition to have all our Portion in this Life, and none in the next; which is frequently the case of such as swim in Plenty and Ease here, without any mixture of Trouble or Adversity. 'Twas a stinging Reflection that was given to *Dives*; *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things, and Lazarus evil things, therefore he is comforted and thou art tormented*: which is enough to make us rather dread than desire Prosperity, and with *Agar* either to pray against it, or for Grace to prevent the danger of it.

4thly, For the clearing of this Point, I say farther, That Adversity is not so much a Curse as a Blessing, and Afflictions are rather marks of God's Favour than his Anger. *My Son* (saith Solomon) *despise not the Chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his Correction; for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a Father the Son in whom he delighteth*; Prov. 3. 11, 12. A Father, you know, corrects his Child, not because he hates, but because he loves and delights in him: he does it only for his good, to amend what is amiss in him, and remove what may hinder his future Happiness. *You only have I known of all the Families of the Earth* (saith God to the *Israelites*) *therefore will I punish you for your Iniquities*; Amos 3. 2. where he makes it a token of his peculiar Love and Favour to correct them for their Amendment, and to punish them here, that he may spare them hereafter. And the Apostle tells us, that God thus *scourges every Son whom he receiveth*, Heb. 12. He takes this method with his own Children, to instil his Grace into them, and to fit them for Glory: *If ye endure Chastening* (saith he) *God dealeth with you as with Sons; for what Son is there whom the Father chasteneth not?* ver. 7. Where he makes Correction the mark of our Sonship, and signifies, that God acts the part of a Father in inflicting it, and we perform the Duty of Sons in enduring and submitting to it. Infomuch that *if ye be without Chastisement* (saith he) *of which all are Partakers, then are ye Bastards, and not Sons*: that is, we have more reason to doubt our Relation to and Interest in him, by sparing and letting us alone, than



than we have to question his Love, or fear his Anger in correcting us; for his forbearing to punish, is many times his leaving a Person or People to themselves, and giving them over as incorrigible, as he once did the rebellious *Israelites*, saying, *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more*; Isa. 1. 5. Whereas by correcting us as he sees cause, he keeps us still under the Discipline of Children, and thereby makes us *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*.

By all which we see what good reason the Prophet had to say, *O Lord, correct me*; that being sometimes the best and the only way to bring us to him.

And now having premis'd these things concerning the Danger of Prosperity, and the Benefits of Adversity, we may learn how far it is fit to decline the one, and desire the other. Prosperity may be and often is prejudicial to us, which hath made good Men sometimes pray against it. Adversity may and sometimes is good and beneficial for us; which hath made pious Men to ask and sue for it, to prevent greater Evils. Hence we find those Worthies mention'd in the eleventh Chapter to the *Hebrews*, *chusing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a season*; and preferring Sufferings and Hardships in a good Cause, before Ease and Plenty in a bad. Not that Afflictions are desirable in themselves, but only for the good end and issue of them; for tho no Chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet it afterwards yields the peaceable fruits of Righteousness to them that are exercis'd therewith. Before I was afflicted (saith holy David) *I went astray, but now I have learned thy Testimonies*. Prosperity misled him into by and wrong paths, but Adversity reduc'd him, and set him right; which made him patiently and thankfully receive Evil, as well as Good, at God's hands. Where the Cords of Love are not strong enough to draw, there 'tis a mercy by the Rod to be driven to him; and where Kindness will not prevail, 'tis well if we are enforc'd by Judgment to learn Righteousness. In such cases we may very well call upon God to mind us by Afflictions, to prevent our wanderings from him, and to say with the Prophet here, *O Lord, correct us*: For as we desire Physick, tho it be bitter and unpleasant, for the Health of our Bodies; so may we with much more reason desire Affliction, tho grievous and uneasy, for the Welfare of our Souls.



But tho the Prophet here teaches us sometimes to desire Correction, and to say with him, *O Lord, correct me*; yet 'tis not absolutely, without any restriction or limitation, but with a reservation of Mercy: which will bring me to the

Next thing propounded, to wit, The Mitigation of God's Corrections: for the Prophet to—*Correct me, O Lord,*—adds, *but with Judgment, not in thine Anger*. Where he begs of God to sugar these bitter Pills of Affliction, to mix his Corrections with Mercy, and to allay all outward Calamities with a Supply of some inward Comforts; he prays him to lay the Rod gently upon him, that he may be able to bear it. Correction may indeed be sometimes necessary to warn and awaken us; for if we feel no smart for our Sins, we shall too easily run into them, and be hardly persuaded to leave them: and therefore Solomon wisely observes, that *he that spareth the Rod, hateth his Son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes*; Prov. 13. 24. But yet we may pray God to deal as gently with us as possible, not to lay his Hand too heavy upon us, but to make his Chastisement as easy and tolerable as may be. So we find Ezra acknowledging, in the behalf of the *Israelites*, that tho God had brought evil upon them for their evil deeds, yet he punish'd them less than their Iniquities deserv'd, and at length gave them deliverance from it; Ezra 9. 13. He who considers the just Vengeance that is due to Sin, or the heavy Punishment it deserves both here and hereafter, will think a temporal Chastisement, that tends to prevent or deliver from it, a great Benefit or Favour; and will say with St. Austin, "Lord, lance or bind me, yea burn and scarrify me here, that thou mayst spare me hereafter." So that we are taught here, not so much to fear or fly Afflictions, as in some cases to desire some gentle Correction from our heavenly Father, such as he useth to do with his own Children; that he would use

The Rod, *ist, with Judgment*: that is, not with the Rigour or Severity of his Justice, but to temper it with Lenity and Mildness, and in the midst of Judgment to remember Mercy. Again, to correct us with Judgment, is with a due Consideration of our Weakness, and to proportion his Correction to the Measure of our Strength: so the Psalmist acknowledges, *he knoweth whereof we are made, and remembreth that we are but Dust*; Psal. 103. 14. Once

Once more, to correct us with Judgment, is with an eye to our Amendment; not as earthly Parents sometimes do, *chasten their Children after their own pleasure*, from Fancy or Humour, for little or no Fault, and for no good End or Purpose; but God doth it only *for our Profit, that we maybe Partakers of his Holiness*. And we may well enough desire to fall into such gracious and merciful hands, which correct only with Judgment, in a sober, gentle and judicial way. To which is added,

*2dly, Not in thine Anger*; that is, not like a furious angry Person, who regards not how, or where, or what he strikes: for *Ira furor brevis est*, Anger is a short Madness, that transports Men above, beside, and beyond the measures of Reason and Judgment. And therefore the Prophet here prays, that God would moderate his Anger, and not suffer *his whole Displeasure to arise*; and tho we have given him sufficient cause to be angry, yet that he would not let loose his Passion, or suffer it to run too high, or last too long against us: *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?* (saith holy David) *and shall thy Wrath burn like Fire?*

But here it may be ask'd, Is it fit for Creatures to prescribe the Manner, Method, or Measure of their Maker's Corrections? Shall the Subject direct the Magistrate in the ways and degrees of his Punishment? or the Servant say to his Master, Lay aside the Rod, 'tis enough? Hath not the Potter power over the Clay, to make one a Vessel of Honour, and another of Dishonour? and shall either of them say, Why do'st thou do or make me thus?

To this I answer, No: But yet God deals not with us by an absolute Will, or the Rules of strict Justice, but hath made many favourable Allowances to our Infirmities, and hath both allow'd and encourag'd us to plead those his Concessions and Condescensions, as our Necessities shall require. *Where are thy old Loving-kindnesses?* saith David: and, *Remember thy Loving-kindnesses, which have been ever of old*: and, *Forget not the Oath, that thou hast sworn unto David in thy truth*. God hath declar'd himself to be *slow to anger, and ready to forgive*; and therefore well may we say with the Prophet, *O Lord, correct us with Judgment, and not in thine Anger*: and that because his proceeding in Wrath and Rigour against us would bring us to utter Ruin. Which is

The last Particular of the Text; containing the Reason of this Petition, in those words, *Lest thou bring us to nothing*. By this we are to understand, not a State of total Annihilation; for both our Bodies and Souls are design'd for Immortality, and so cannot in that sense be reduc'd to nothing: but a State of everlasting Damnation, wherein both will be for ever miserable; which is a State worse than nothing: And yet this would be the case of the best of us, if God should proceed in Anger and Severity against us. *Who can stand in thy fight when thou art angry?* saith the Psalmist, *Psal. 76. 7.* We cannot bear the least Frown of his Countenance, and much less can we stand up under the weight of his Arm, which is able to crush us to nothing, or sink us into a Condition that is much worse. If the *Wrath of a King be as the Roaring of a Lion*, how much more fierce and furious is the Wrath of the King of Kings? *When thou art angry, all our days are gone*, saith David: *we consume away in thy Displeasure, and are afraid of thy wrathful Indignation*; *Psal. 90. 7, 9.* And therefore the Prophet prays here, that he may fall into the Arms of God's Mercy, to be *corrected with Judgment*; not into the hands of his Justice, to be *punish'd in his Anger*. For to fall into the comfortable Arms of his Mercy, would bring him to something, to a Sense of his Sins, and that would lead him by Grace here, and after bring him to Glory; but to fall into the fearful hands of his Justice, would be utter Ruin, and bring him to nothing but eternal Destruction.

The Sum of all then is, that we are rather to desire than despise the Chastening of the Lord; willing him not wholly to lay aside the Rod, but to use it gently for our future Amendment; that he would correct us in Love and in Measure, to bring us to himself; not in Anger and Rigour to drive us from him, and bring us to nothing.

In a word, Let us not be too fond of Prosperity, which fattens for the Slaughter; but rather crave sometimes for Adversity, which administers to our future Happiness: chusing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a season. And then these light Afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory: Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE



DISCOURSE IX.

St. MATTHEW III. 2.

*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

**T**HIS Sentence containing the first and great Duty of the Gospel, is very proper to preface our Prayers, and introduce our Devotion: for Repentance was the first Lesson that was taught, upon the first publishing the Glad Tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven, and is still necessary to be learnt, to attain the Fruition of them.

When St. John, the Harbinger of the *Messias*, was sent before to prepare the way of the Lord, he did it by preaching the Doctrine of Repentance; which was most apt to smooth his way, and to make it plain and ready before him. Accordingly, at our Saviour's Coming he alarm'd the World, and usher'd him in with this Saying; *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* Where, by the *Kingdom of Heaven* is meant the Kingdom of Christ, or the Grace and Favour of the Gospel, which he brought with it.

By its *being at hand*, we are to understand its near Approach by his Coming; for then the *Messias* was to set up his spiritual Kingdom, and to reign in the Hearts of his People.

His Call to Repentance was a Summons to all that would be his Subjects, and saved by him, to break off their former Sins, to subdue their sensual Lusts, and renounce their old Masters: for the whole World before lay in Wickedness, and were carry'd captive by Sin and Satan at their pleasure; and then was the time to chuse and to change for a better Master, by submitting to Christ's Kingdom and Dominion, or else they were to continue still Bond-slaves and Captives to the worst of Enemies.

And this Call concerns us now, as much as them to whom it was at first given; for we stand in the same need of a Saviour, and must expect to be saved the same way, and therefore must hearken to the same Voice; *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

'Tis true, Christ is now come, and hath set up his Kingdom in the World; but still Sin and Satan set up a Kingdom against him, and strive to keep their hold. Now we must disclaim these, and yield up our selves as obedient Servants and Subjects to him, if we look for Salvation from him. So that the words are a strict and positive Summons to all the World to repent, which was the best preparation for his Coming, and is still the best use we can make of it, ever since 'twas first preach'd by St. John in the Wilderness of Judea, and to all that resorted to him thither, and was after publish'd by Christ himself in all Places where he came; call'd therefore his first Sermon, and the first Lesson we are to learn in his School: which Lesson his Apostles and Disciples inculcated ever after, calling upon all Men every where to repent. In the words then we have,

*First*, A Duty enjoyn'd, and that is *Repentance*. And, *Secondly*, An Argument to enforce it, *For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. In treating of both which, I must shew the Nature and Necessity of Repentance, together with the Motives to, and the Hindrances from it; and then make some practical Application of the whole.

For the Nature of Repentance, it consists chiefly in these three things; Confession of Sin, Contrition for it, and Conversion from it.

The First Act of Repentance is the Confession of Sin, which is the laying open our Offences before God, join'd with a due acknowledgment of the Guilt and Aggravations of them: Of this we read in St. John's first Converts, who came to him from Jerusalem, Judea, and the Regions round about, and were baptiz'd of him in Jordan, *confessing their Sins*, ver. 6. of this Chapter; that is, each one particularly acknowledg'd their own Transgressions. The like we read of St. Paul's Converts, of whom *many that believ'd came and confess'd, and shew'd their Deeds*, Acts 19. 18. meaning, that they came to the Apostles, and told them the sinful Actions and Courses of their former Life. Such a Confession must be made by all true Penitents: *I confess'd my Sins* (saith David) *and have not hid mine Iniquities; I acknowledg'd my Transgression, and my*

*my Sin is ever before me* : which is the first Act of true Repentance.

The Second is, Contrition for Sin, which is a Sorrow and Compunction of Heart for the Evil we have committed : Of this we read in *St. Peter's Converts*, who, upon the hearing of his Sermon, *were prick'd at the Heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the Apostles, Men and Brethren, what shall we do ?* To whom they presently reply'd, *Repent, and be baptiz'd in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the Remission of Sin, Acts 2. 37, 38.* This Sorrow for Sin, *St. Paul* styles a *Godly Sorrow*, or *sorrowing after a Godly sort* ; to distinguish it from worldly Sorrow, which is for some earthly Losses or Disasters, or for Sin only, upon the account of some worldly Shame or Inconvenience that attends it. This *Sorrow of the World*, the Apostle tells us, *worketh Death* ; but a Godly Sorrow, proceeding from a Sense of offending God, and abusing his Goodness, *worketh Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of, 2 Cor. 7. 9, 10.* This Sorrow we find was in *David*, for the heinous Sins of Murder and Adultery which he had committed : In *Jeremy*, when he lamented the Transgressions of the People ; and in *Peter*, for denying his Master : who all wept bitterly night and day, with hearts broken with Sorrow, and fill'd with remorse and anguish of Mind for what they had done. And the same will be found in all true Penitents : which is the second Act of Repentance.

The Third is Conversion, or turning from Sin unto God, and doing Works meet for Repentance. This is the principal Part or Act of this Grace, which implies not a turning from the Practice of Sin only, which some by Considerations may sometimes move Men to do ; but from all love and liking to it, so as to hate and detest it, as we do a Viper or a Toad. And this is to be done not to this or that Sin only, which we can easily dispense with, but laying the Axe to the very Root, and cutting down the whole Body of Sin ; not sparing any Limb or Branch of it, no not the Sin that doth more easily beset us ; nor allowing our selves in any one darling or beloved Vice. And as this turning from Sin must be thorow and universal, so must it be constant too, without relapsing or turning again to Folly.

To all which we must add, the turning unto God with full purpose of Heart, the abiding in his Love and Service



to our Lives end, without ever leaving or revolting from him.

This is briefly the Nature, and these are the Effects of true Repentance: To which, as St. John call'd his Disciples, to prepare them for the coming of our Saviour; so are we still to hearken to the same Voice, now he is come, if we mean to be his Disciples, and to be sav'd by him. And this will lead me from the Nature, to consider

The Necessity of Repentance. And for this we may observe a double Necessity: The one taken from the many Calls and Commands to Repentance; the other, from its being a necessary means and instrument of Salvation. For the

1<sup>st</sup>. 'Twere endless to recite the many and repeated Calls in Holy Scripture to this Duty of Repentance. To pass by the many Precepts to it in the Old Testament, the Gospel in the New begins with it, saying, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* Our blessed Saviour enter'd upon his Office with preaching it, saying, *Repent, and believe the Gospel,* Mark 1. 15. His Apostles likewise did the same, *Mark 6. 12. they went out and preach'd every where, that Men should repent. The times of Ignorance* (saith St. Paul to the People of Athens). *God wink'd at, but now he calleth all Men every where to repent,* Acts 17. 30. The Scripture every where abounds with Precepts and Exhortations to this purpose, which shew the indispensable necessity laid upon us all to repent.

But besides this Necessity arising from the Command of God, there is another Necessity arising from the Nature and Tendency of the Duty; it being a necessary means and instrument of Salvation, without which we must be utterly lost and undone for ever. *Except ye repent* (saith our Saviour) *ye shall all likewise perish.* God hath appointed Repentance as the ordinary means of Reconciliation, 'tis the Condition of our Pardon, and the Gate that opens and enters into everlasting Life. *Repent and be converted* (saith St. Peter) *that your Sins may be blotted out, when the times of Refreshment shall come from the Presence of the Lord,* Acts 3. 19. And indeed what more easy and reasonable Terms could be desir'd, to find favour with God, whom we have offended, than to be sorry for past Offences, and to amend for the future? Had we the liberty of propounding our own condition of Mercy and Forgiveness, we could not have made or mention'd milder; for 'tis no more than we expect from our own Servants

and Dependents, viz. that they should be sensible of their Faults, and resolve to amend them; and yet this is the whole of Repentance which is requir'd of us: And *how shall we escape, if we refuse such gentle Terms, or neglect so great Salvation?* From the Nature and Necessity of Repentance, pass we on.

To the Reason or Motive here assign'd to stir us up to it; and that is taken from the near Approach of Christ's Kingdom: *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* Now this Kingdom of Heaven consists both of the Kingdom of Grace here, and the Kingdom of Glory hereafter. The Kingdom of Grace here consists in the glad Tidings of Salvation, reveal'd and offer'd in the Gospel; and this was proclaim'd by St. John as near at hand at that time, by the Coming of our Saviour. And now this Kingdom of God is come upon us, by his perfecting this Salvation for us, and publishing it unto us; *for the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, both appear'd unto all Men, Tit. 2. 11.* And now is our Salvation nearer than when we believ'd; which is a stronger Argument to Repentance, now when the Kingdom of Heaven is come, than when it was but near at hand; for we have now daily tenders of Grace and Mercy made to us, and the glad Tidings of Salvation are continually sounding in our Ears, which are loud Calls and strong Obligations to break off our Sins by Repentance, and to accept of the Grace and Mercy tender'd to us.

But there is another Kingdom of Heaven that is yet at hand, and that is a Kingdom of Glory, to reward all that receive and embrace the Offers of the Gospel; and a Kingdom of Power, to punish and destroy all that wilfully reject them.

This is briefly the Motive to Repentance mention'd in the Text, from the near Approach of the *Kingdom of Heaven*, which is here said to be *at hand*, and for which nothing can better prepare us than Repentance. To which I might add other weighty Motives,

As, 1<sup>st</sup>, The unspeakable Evil and Danger of Sin unrepented of; for 'tis that which separates between God and us, and with-holds good things from us: and therefore the Prophet Ezekiel exhorts us, to turn away from all our Transgressions, that Iniquity may not be our Ruin, Ezek. 18. 30.



2ly, The great Excellency and Safety of Vertue may engage us to turn to it by Repentance : for nothing can bring us nearer unto God, or make us more like unto him, than real Goodness ; nor can any thing give us better Security, than walking in the Paths of Righteousness : for *he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely*, Prov. 10. 9.

3ly, The invaluable Worth and Wants of our Souls, which are worth more than the whole World, should oblige us to take care of them, which can only be by turning unto God by an unfeign'd Repentance ; for that alone can give Ease, and Rest, and Happiness to our Souls, as our Saviour himself tells us, *Mat. 11. 30.*

Lastly, The Shortness of this Life, and the important Affairs of Eternity, may farther engage us in this Duty : for the one may serve to wean us from the Vanities of this World, and the other to secure to us the Blessedness of the next : both which are only done by this Vertue of Repentance.

And now having shew'd the Motives to this Duty, it may not be amiss to discover and remove some of the Hindrances that keep many from it ; of which I shall mention two or three, and they are,

Inadvertency, or want of Consideration ; Fickleness, or want of Resolution ; and Dilatoriness, or putting it off by Procrastination. Of each of these briefly : And,

1. Inadvertence, or want of Consideration, is a great impediment to true Repentance : For did Men consider the danger of Sin, and the many unavoidable Mischiefs it leads to, both here and hereafter, they would far more readily run from it, than return to it. Did they clearly behold the Beauty of Holiness, and seriously consider the Rewards of Vertue in this Life and the next, they could not resist the Charms, but would be enamour'd with the love of it. *I consider'd my ways* (saith David) *and turn'd my Feet unto thy Testimonies* : and indeed every considering Man will do the same. But the misery of it is, Men cannot be persuaded seriously to consider their Ways and Actions, and soberly weigh the Reasons and Consequences of things. Satan and the World blind their Minds, and make them deaf to all Instructions ; and the alluring Baits of sensual Pleasures, catch and carry them away to their eternal Ruin. Sin and Wickedness owe all their Empire in Mens Souls to Stupidity and Inconsideration ; they reign undisturbedly only in ignorant, secure and unthinking Spirits :



Spirits : whereas a little serious Consideration would awaken out of this deep Sleep, and lead them to Repentance. Sensuality and Vice would lose their force and power, if Men would sit down and ponder a little what they are about, and whither their sinful Courses tend ; which is therefore to be done by all that wish well to their own Souls.

2. Another Hindrance to true Repentance, is Fickleness or want of Resolution. There are some who are pretty well convinc'd of the Evil and Danger of their ways, and have many times some thoughts and faint desires of Amendment ; yea, now and then make some weak essays and attempts towards a Reformation : but yet not ripening into a thorow and firm Resolution, soon wither away, and come to nothing ; their Goodness being *like the Morning-Cloud, or Early Dew, which soon passeth away.* Religion seems sometimes to get ground upon them, and then they leave some of their former Sins, and for a while grow more devout and zealous in some Duties ; but in a little time Nature returns again, and they renew their old acquaintance with their former Vices. Such unsuccessful Attempts, occasion'd thro their own default, discourage them from their Duty ; and being often foil'd in these Conflicts, they at last despair of getting the Victory, and so give up all for lost, settling in their sinful Courses, and scarce think of repenting or returning any more.

The last Hindrance I shall mention of true Repentance, is that of Procrastination, or putting it off to a farther time. There are some who count upon mending their Lives, and leaving their Sins, and growing better ; but they think 'tis time enough yet to set about it, and they design to do it hereafter. They are loth to leave the World in an impenitent State, and hope to leave their Sins before that time : at present they may indulge themselves in them, purposing to forsake them at last, and to amend they know not when ; and so content themselves with a Repentance in Reversion, which perhaps may never come. This is one of the most fatal Cheats that Men can put upon themselves, and yet 'tis too frequent and common among many, to the utter Ruin both of their Bodies and Souls. To prevent which, know that if thou art unable or unwilling to repent to day, thou wilt be much more so hereafter ; thy Sins will grow stronger upon thee,

thee, and thy Heart become harder; and what now seems difficult to thee, may hereafter become impossible; and therefore the Apostle calls upon us, *Now whilst it is call'd to day, to hearken to his Voice, lest our Hearts be harden'd thro the Deceitfulness of Sin.*

To draw to a Conclusion, Let us all from this Discourse learn the great Lesson of Repentance; and to that end, consider,

(1.) The infinite Goodness of God, in admitting us to Favour upon such easy and reasonable terms. This is a Mercy greater than ever was vouchsafed to the fallen Angels, for they were left to perish irrecoverably without any remedy or redress. But God took pity upon worthless fallen Man, and contriv'd a Redemption for him; restoring us to Mercy upon the Condition of Repentance, which is this day graciously tender'd to us; And we must be very ungrateful, to despise the Riches of such free Grace, and neglect so great Salvation; which is abundantly enough to invite us to him, and to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.

(2.) Consider what it cost our Saviour to obtain these terms of Reconciliation for us; how he laid aside his Glory, and underwent Shame, and Death, and Hell, to make our Peace, and procure Pardon and Redemption for us: And are not these Cords of Love strong enough to draw us to him, to compel us to comply with such reasonable Terms, and to lead us to Repentance?

(3.) Consider that there is Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth. The prodigal Son brought Extasies of Joy and Rejoicing to his Father, upon his Return; which is but a faint Adumbration of that Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, that is in the presence of God and his holy Angels, upon the Return of every truly penitent Soul. And what nobler work can we do, than promote the Joy of Heaven, and increase the Hallelujahs of glorify'd Spirits; which, you see, is done by the Repentance of a Sinner? And that alone can fit us to join and bear a part with them. Let us then administer this Occasion of Joy to the heavenly Inhabitants, that we may share with them at last in the Bliss of those happy Regions.

To conclude, Let us all hearken to this Voice sounding in our Text, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* The Kingdom of Grace is come already, and the Kingdom



Kingdom of Glory is not far off: and 'tis Repentance only, that can make us meet Subjects of both. Let us then, upon such earnest Invitations and strong Engagements, break off our Sins by an unfeigned Repentance, and turn unto God by hearty Obedience. And by thus becoming and continuing true Subjects of his Kingdom of Grace here, we shall shortly enter upon and reign for ever with him in his Kingdom of Glory.

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## DISCOURSE X.

St. LUKE XV. 18, 19.

*I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

**T**HIS Sentence is prescrib'd here at the Entrance of our Prayers, to encourage us to go to our Heavenly Father, from whom we have all gone astray; and to beg of him the Supply of those Wants, which our wandring from him hath unhappily occasion'd: saying, in the words of the Text, *I will arise, and go to my Father, &c.* The Words are a part of the Parable of the prodigal Son; in which we may observe,

1<sup>st</sup>, His extreme Folly and Misery in leaving his Father's House.

2<sup>dly</sup>, His great Wisdom and Happiness in returning to it.

3<sup>dly</sup>, The exceeding kind and joyful Reception he met with thereupon.

The first of these is suppos'd in those words, *I will arise and go to my Father*: which imply his former leaving and departing from him, without which there had been no need of returning. But this is more plainly set forth in the preceding part of the Parable; where, in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Verses, we find him saying to his Father; *Father, give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me, &c.* The young Man being, as he thought, arriv'd to the Age of Discretion, and withal being impatient of Restraint, and desirous



desirous of Liberty, would fain live and be at his own disposal; and to that end, desir'd his Father to set him out his Share of Goods, to put his Portion into his own hands, and leave him to his own Conduct.

The Father did as he desir'd him, and gave him both his Portion and his Liberty: which being done, to get out of the reach of his Father's eye, he betook himself into a far Country, where he might freely indulge himself in all manner of Looseness and Excess without controul. By which means, the Stock that his Father gave him was soon exhausted, and his Substance wasted by riotous living; so that he was reduc'd to great Want and Necessity, being driven to feed with the Swine, and to live upon Husks, of which too he had scarce enough to supply the Cravings of Nature, and to keep him from starving.

Now because 'tis requisite a little to unfold the Parable as we go, we may note, that by the Father here is meant God Almighty, the Maker and Proprietor of all things. By the Son we are to understand Mankind, who are all his Creatures and Servants. The Portion of Goods given to them, are the several Gifts or Talents intrusted with them, and committed to their charge.

Now Mankind unwilling to live under the restraint of God's Laws, and desiring to be at their own disposal, quit their Heavenly Father's House, go as far as they can from him, and follow the swing of their own Lusts; till they have mispent the Stock the Father gave them in Luxury and Folly, and so become Slaves and Vassals to Sin and Satan.\* Indeed, we all turn'd first Prodigals and then Bankrupts in *Adam*; we cast off the yoke, and willing to have our own way, left our Father's House, and soon squander'd away all the Stock of Grace and Goodness which God had given us, and so became lost undone Creatures, expos'd to all manner of Want and Misery. This is the forlorn Case of all Men by Nature, represented here by the sad Condition of this Prodigal, in leaving his Father's House; the first part of this Parable.

The second is, his returning again to his Father, express'd here in these words, *I will arise and go to my Father.* And to this he is said to be led, by his coming to himself; for so the words immediately before tell us: *When he came to himself, he said, How many hired Servants of my Father have Bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise, and go to my Father. When he came*

*came to himself*, implies that he was before beside himself, or not so well in his wits as he should be. And this is the Condition of a Man dead, or in a Sleep, or in a Swoon, or in a Fit of Drunkennels or Madnes; in all which, Men are said to be depriv'd of the free use of themselves, or to be in some measure beside themselves: for their Reason and Senses are either wholly extinguish'd, or in a great measure interrupted and abated; and by a Recovery out of any of them, a Man is said to come to himself. This was the Case of the Prodigal here, and is so of all penitent and returning Sinners. Whilst they continue in their evil Courses, they are said to be dead in Trespases and Sins, or in a deep Sleep or Slumber; and when they come out of either, they are said to come to themselves: *My Son was dead, and is alive again*, saith the Father in this Parable, ver. 32. And, *Awake thou that sleepest* (saith the Prophet) *and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee Life*, Ephes. 5. 14. Again, He that is in a Swoon, or in a Fit of Drunkennels, is said to have lost for a while the use of himself; his Understanding is clouded or befotted, and his Spirits overloaded or oppress'd; he hath rather the Shape than the Sense of a Man, and is unable for the present to guide or govern himself: And this is the Condition of all Sinners, till they get out of it, and come to themselves. So 'tis said of the Prodigal, *He was lost, and is found*, ver. 32. he was lost to all his Senses and Good Manners, but now hath found and recover'd both.

Once more, he that is in a Phrenzy or under a Distraction, is said to be beside himself, and to have lost the Use of his Reason; which when he recovers, and returns to his Wits and Understanding again, he is then said to *come to himself*. This was the Case of the Prodigal during his Extravagance, and is so of all dissolute and profligate Offenders, who whilst they remain such, are in a sort of Phrenzy and Distraction; all habitual and customary Sinners being little better than Madmen. For if to run upon inevitable Dangers without any fear or wit, to walk upon the brink of a Precipice, where there is an imminent danger of falling, or to run before the mouth of a Cannon ready to be discharg'd, be evident signs of Madnes; if he that wilfully tears his own Flesh, and delights in doing himself mischief, be justly look'd upon as a Man distracted and out of his wits: then may he that affronts his  
Maker,



Maker, that defies an Almighty Power that can easily dash him in pieces, and walks on securely in ways, from whence he is every moment ready to drop into Hell, be justly reckon'd in the number of such Madmen.

But as Phrenzy, if taken in time, by the use of proper means, is a curable Distemper; so when the Prodigal came to discern the Folly and Danger of his ways, he is said to *come to himself*, to recover some Use of his Reason, and to return again to a sound Mind: for considering what misery he had brought himself to, by leaving his Father's House, and bethinking himself how far short he that was a Son was of the Comfort and Happiness of his hired Servants, he resolv'd to continue so no longer; but said, *I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son.* Where we have,

*First*, His settled Resolution, *I will arise and go to my Father.*

*Secondly*, His sorrowful Confession; *And will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee; and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son.* Of each briefly.

And, *First*, Of his Resolution, *I will arise and go to my Father*, &c. which is as if he had said, I am undone if I sit still, and must inevitably perish, if I bestir not my self in some other course; therefore *I will arise and go to my Father*, whom I have foolishly forsaken. How or whether he will receive such an ungracious Child, I know not: however, my Case is forlorn and desperate, I must take this course or starve and die. I will therefore spend no more time in Doubts, Disputes, or Despair, but will cast my self intirely upon his Mercy, with a full purpose of attending my Life, and undoing all that I have done amiss. I see my folly in squandering away my Substance, having now nothing left to support me in my extreme Want and Misery: I must try the Affection, and sound the Bowels of a Father; I will return to him, and resolve in all things to obey my Father's Will.

The same or like Resolution must be taken up by all that have left God and his Ways, and drove on for any time a Trade of Sin. They must not only think or talk of re-  
turning,



turning, but must in good earnest resolve upon it: and that not with slight hasty Wishes, but,

(1.) With serious, mature, and deliberate Purposes, like those of *David*; *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy Testimonies*, Psal. 119. 59. Slight and sudden Resolutions taken up without any serious or mature Consideration, are like rash Vows, that are easily made, and easily broken. There are some who upon the hearing of a serious Discourse, or upon a Fit of Sickness, or some sudden Calamity that betides them, seem to fall out with their Sins as the Causes of them, and to resolve against them for the future; who yet, when the Discourse is forgotten, and the Sickness and Calamity is over, renew their acquaintance with their old Vices, and are as fond of them as ever. Such Fits and Flashes of Zeal are of no continuance, but quickly cool and come to nothing. *Peter* in a sudden Heat and Bravery of Mind told our Saviour, that tho all Men forsook him, yet would not he forsake him; yea, that he would rather die than leave him: and yet in a little time his Resolution fail'd, and he shamefully deny'd him thrice. A firm Resolution is founded not upon a hasty Fit of Zeal, but upon mature Deliberation, and that will make it permanent and lasting: then shall we not only say with the Prodigal, *I will arise and go to my Father*, but with him too actually go and continue with him. Again,

(2.) This Resolution must be made speedily and presently, not putting it off to a farther time, nor saying with the Sluggard, *yet a little Sleep, a little Slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep*; but we must arise and go presently. *I made haste, and delay'd not the time* (saith the Psalmist) *to keep thy righteous Judgments*. He that thinks of returning, must do it quickly and out of hand; for the longer he defers it, the farther he goes out of the way, and makes his Return the more difficult. Some by delays have been totally lost, and gone so far out of the way, that they could never return or find it again; and 'tis not to be doubted that the infernal Regions abound with many who thought of going to their heavenly Father, but put it off till 'twas too late, and were taken away before the time to which they adjourn'd it came. And therefore the Prodigal here knowing the danger of Delays, resolv'd instantly to amend, and presently set about it.

(3.) Our Resolution must be uniform, constant, and universal. In our Return to our Father, we must leave every false way, and keep steady and firm to the right, even to the end. There are many things that are apt to stop us in our course, or turn us out of our way to him, which we are carefully to watch against and overcome. The World hath Baits and Allurements to draw us aside, and likewise Rubs and Discouragements to divert us from him; but we must hearken to no Enticements, nor stick at any Difficulties we may meet with, but go through thick and thin, to arrive at our Father's House. In short, our Resolution must be settled and speedy, and our Reformation thorow and constant, turning from all our former Sins, and returning to our whole Duty, without any farther revolting or forsaking of him. Such was that of this penitent Prodigal, who arose and went to his Father, and at his meeting of him cast himself down with all Humility and Self-Abasement. And this will lead me,

*Secondly, To his Confession made at his coming to him, which was, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son. Where we may observe,*

1. An Acknowledgment of his Guilt; *Father, I have sinned.*

2. His Aggravation of it; *I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.*

3. His Contrition and Self-Condernation; *And am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son.*

1. The Prodigal here takes to himself the whole Guilt and Shame of his evil Courses: he does not go about to hide or excuse them, nor does he lay the blame of them upon any other; but makes a plain and ingenuous Confession of them, and charges none but himself with the Guilt of his former Follies and Extravagancies, saying, *Father, I have sinned.* And this is what all penitent and returning Sinners must do, to wit, go unto God with blushing and confusion of face, and say unto him, *I have sinned, and done very foolishly.* He must not with the proud Pharisee stand upon his Justification, and arrogantly tell God Almighty, that he is not as bad as other Men; but with the poor Publican *smite on his breast,* and with all humility say, *Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner!*

But



But the Prodigal here rests not in the bare Acknowledgment of his Fault, but goes on,

2. To aggravate it from the Circumstances of the Persons against whom it was committed: *I have sinned against Heaven and before thee*; that is against my Father in Heaven, and against thee my earthly Parent, to whom I ow'd the greatest Duty and Observance. 'Twas not against Strangers or Enemies, that bore me no good-will, or ever did me any kindness; that might have lessen'd my Fault, and extenuated my Guilt: but 'twas against my best Friends, my nearest and dearest Relations both in Heaven and Earth, that might justly expect better things from me: 'twas against God, that made and preserv'd me; and against my Father, that begat and nourish'd me: who might both have reasonably look'd for other Returns of Duty and Service from me. But I have broke through all those Obligations, and cast off the strongest Cords of Love and Duty from me. In short, to enhance his Guilt, he owns himself to have sinned against much Light, and against much Love, and against the Convictions of his own Mind; and therefore justly reckon'd himself one of the worst and greatest of Sinners: which is the course of all true Penitents. To all which, the Prodigal adds,

3. Contrition, or a deep Sense of his own Unworthiness, in those words, *And am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son*. Where he is so far from justifying, that he is still accusing and condemning himself: He owns that he deserv'd no Favour, and could expect nothing but Frowns, and that he who had cast himself out of his Father's Family, might be justly cast out of his Thoughts and Care. 'Twas too much for him to be call'd a Son, who had not deserv'd the Title of a Servant. He makes no Apology, but takes to himself the Shame and Guilt of his Disobedience, owning that he had forfeited the Honour of a Son, and might well enough be excluded from the Favour of a Servant. In like manner, a true Penitent will be always judging and condemning himself, that he may not be judg'd and condemn'd of the Lord. *Jacob* made himself less than the least of all God's Mercies; *David* humbled himself below the meanest of God's Creatures; *Job* abas'd himself to dust and ashes; and the Prodigal here thought himself unworthy of the Crumbs that fell from his Father's Table. And thus to arraign and condemn our selves in the Court of our own

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Conscience, is the best way to be clear'd and acquitted at God's Tribunal.

And now from this Example of the Prodigal we are directed what to do in the whole Course of Repentance; which is, not to sit still, or to suffer our selves to be lull'd asleep in a carnal and fatal Security, but to *arise* and bestir our selves, and go by Faith and Prayer to our Heavenly Father; and the better to move his Bowels, to cast our selves down in a humble Confession of our Sins before him, acknowledging our own Vileness and Unworthiness, and relying wholly upon his Mercy and Goodness to pity and relieve us. To encourage us hereunto, let us,

In the last place, Consider the hearty Welcome and kind Reception which the returning Prodigal here met with upon his so doing. And here we read, in the Close of the Parable, that when the prodigal Son arose, and was going to his Father, his Father *saw him, and had compassion upon him, and when he was yet a great way off, ran to meet him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him*; ver. 20. He saw him at a distance, and took knowledg of him when he was yet afar off; his long absence had not so far estrang'd or alter'd him, nor his Vice and Poverty so much disfigur'd or disguis'd him, but he could discern him when he was a great way off. The Affection of a Father is quick and sagacious, nor can the Love of a Mother easily forget the Fruit of her Womb; but if that may be sometimes done, *yet will not I forget*, saith our Father in Heaven.

Moreover, when the Father saw him, he had compassion on him; the sight affected his Heart, and that made his Bowels yern towards him: in like manner, as a *Father pitieth his Child, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him*; Psal. 103. 13. Yea, as high as the Heavens are above the Earth, so far doth his Compassion exceed that of any earthly Parent.

Again, The Father could not stay the Son's coming, but he *ran* to meet him. The Son's Fear and Trouble made him move slowly, but the Father's Affection caus'd him to run nimbly to him, to rid him of both. A Father's Heart is sooner melted into Kindness, than a Son's into Obedience. The Son here took time to consider, but the Father took fire presently; and neither the Gravity of his Years, nor the Dignity of a Father, nor the Remembrance of his Folly, could keep him from running to him. Thus

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is God wont to prevent us with Loving-kindness, and before we call he will answer.

Once more, The Father could not contain his Affection, but suffer'd it to break forth in the tenderest and most endearing Embraces: He greeted him with falling on his neck and kissing him, and receiv'd him with all the inward and outward Expressions of Joy. For he call'd to his *Servants to bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and to put a Ring on his hand, and Shoes on his feet*; ver. 22. He who came almost naked, clad in Rags and tatter'd Garments, was cloth'd in the best Robes, and array'd in the most gorgeous Attire. His Hands, which were before defil'd with serving the Swine, are now adorn'd with Rings: and he that went bare-foot, is now accommodated with Shoes on his feet. By these Ornaments some understand the Robes of Christ's Righteousness, to adorn and clothe the Nakedness of the Soul.

Being thus Honourably set forth, the Father commanded the *fatted Calf to be brought forth and kill'd, that they might eat and be merry*; it being customary to feast and rejoice upon the Return of long absent Friends: and hereby is signify'd the Joy that is in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth. All these Expressions are design'd to set forth the Readiness of God Almighty to receive returning Sinners; which is encouragement to them to be speedy in their Return.

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## DISCOURSE XI.

PSAL. CXLIII. 2.

*Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord;  
for in thy sight shall no Man living be justify'd.*

**H**AD the prodigal Son, mention'd in the foregoing Sentence, been dealt with according to his Deserts, he had been sent to a Goal here, and to Hell hereafter; and instead of being admitted to his Father's House and Table, he had been for ever banish'd from his Presence. But his kind Reception and Entertainment, after all his Extravagancies, teaches us not to despair, but to say with

*David*, in this following Sentence, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no Man living be justify'd.*

*David* was at this time in the Cave of *Adullam*, to hide himself (as some think) in his flight from *Saul*; or to secure himself (as others conjecture) from the pursuit of the *Philistines*. But however that were, it is certain he was then in some great and imminent Danger, from which he pray'd to be deliver'd: and therefore begs of God, in the Verse before the Text, to *hear his Prayer, and to consider his Desire, and to hearken unto him for his Truth and Righteousness sake.* But because he knew that his own Merits could not claim or deserve such a Favour, but rather the quite contrary, he farther begs of him, not to deal with him by the Rules of strict Justice, which he was not able to bear, but *according to the multitude of his Mercies to do away his Offences:* which is the Sense of these words, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord, &c.*

This Sentence is appointed by the Church to be read before we begin our Prayers, to let us know, that we must not expect to be heard for our own Worth, but rely wholly upon the Clemency and Goodness of God, for the granting of our Requests. So we find the Psalmist here did, who fearing that God had a Controversy with him, went, according to our Saviour's Advice, and *agreed with his Adversary quickly*, before it came to extremity; resolving not to stand a trial, which he knew he could not abide, but goes in and submits in time; not staying till Judgment be pronounc'd against him, but seeking to prevent it, by supplicating the Judge, and imploring his Mercy. So did *Job* likewise, who declar'd that *tho he were righteous, yet would he not answer his Maker, but make humble Supplication to his Judge*; *Job 9. 15.* Much less may we guilty Creatures plead Innocence, or stand upon our Justification, but rather say with *David* here, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord, &c.* In which words we have,

*First*, An humble Petition or Deprecation of Judgment, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord.*

*Secondly*, A strong Reason to back and enforce it, *For in thy sight shall no Man living be justify'd.* In treating of both these, I shall shew,



I. That God may justly enter into Judgment with us.

II. That if he do so, the best of us are not able to abide it.

III. That therefore 'tis our Wisdom and Safety to deprecate his Judgment, and to throw our selves upon his Mercy.

I. I say, God may justly enter into Judgment with us. This is here plainly imply'd, in the Psalmist's praying against it, wherein he desires God to forbear exercising that Judgment which he hath a right to exact, and sufficient cause to execute upon us. As for his Right of judging us, that proceeds from the just Power and Dominion he hath over us ; which is grounded,

(1.) Upon the Right of Creation, which gives him an absolute and indisputable Power over the Works of his hands: *It is he that hath made us* (saith the Psalmist) *and not we our selves.* And *hath not the Potter power over the Clay, which his hands have made and form'd ? He giveth us Life and Breath, and all things,* saith the Apostle : and therefore he may judg and call us to an account when he pleases, and *who can say unto him, what dost thou ?* Moreover, he hath the power over us,

(2.) By a Right of Preservation ; for he daily protects and provides for us, without which we should sink and fall back into nothing : His Eye is continually over us, and his Hand holds us up ; we hourly depend upon his Providence, and subsist intirely upon his Bounty, and therefore he may dispose and deal with us as he thinks fit : for *what shall we say or do unto thee, O thou Preserver of Men ?* saith holy Job, chap. 7. 20.

(3.) God hath a farther power over us by a Right of Redemption, having bought us out of the hands of other Lords, who usurp'd Dominion over us. We were all sold and alienated from God by the first Transgression, by which we became Slaves to Sin and Satan ; but God hath redeem'd us again out of their hands, and rescu'd us from that vile Captivity : for *thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold your selves for nought, and ye shall be redeem'd without Money ;* Isa. 52. 3. For which reason, the Apostle tells us, that *we are not our own, but are bought with a Price ;* and that *not with such corruptible things as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of the Son of God, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot ;* 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. And by all the Laws of Reason and Nations, he that bought another out

of Bondage, hath the right to command him, and to call him to account for his Service.

In short, the Relations that God stands in to us, as our Maker, Preserver, and Redeemer, give him the full power over us, to enter into Judgment with us, and to reckon with us for all that we have, are, or can do; which being all receiv'd from him, he may justly call us to an account for them. For as a Father hath Authority over his Children, and a Master over his Servants, to enquire into, judg, and punish their Misdoings; so hath God the right of judging, censuring, and punishing the Miscarriages of all his Creatures.

And as he hath full power to enter into Judgment with us, so have we,

2dly, Given him just cause and occasion so to do: And here,

1. Our great Unfaithfulness in the Goods and Talents committed to us, may justly cause him to call us to a reckoning for them. God Almighty, like the Householder in the Parable, hath intrusted Mankind with sundry Gifts or Talents, to be employ'd to his Honour, and to the Good of one another; which Talents are of several kinds, and bestow'd in different measures and degrees on divers Persons: some have a greater share of Wisdom and Knowledge, and other Gifts of the Mind, to assist and instruct the more ignorant; others have greater Perfections of Body, as Health, Strength, Beauty, and the like, to enable them to do more and greater Service: others again have a larger Portion of Wealth, Plenty, and Prosperity, to relieve the Wants of the Needy and Distressed. Of which Talents we are not so much the Owners, as the Stewards and Dispensers, and are accountable for them to him that gave them. Now 'tis requir'd in *Stewards* (as the Apostle says) *that they be found faithful*: And as they are rewarded for their Fidelity, so are they worthily punish'd for their Unfaithfulness. If then we compare the Use and Improvement we make of God's Gifts, with the End and Design of their Donation, we shall find them fall vastly short, or run quite contrary to what may be and is expected from us; and that most of our Master's Talents are either neglected or embezzled, so that he may justly enter into Judgment with us for these things, and say to us as the Master did to the unjust Steward; *Give an account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer Steward*. And so he may,

2. For



2. For our great Unthankfulness and Unfruitfulness under all his Blessings. And here we of this Nation have great reason to consider and fear such a Reckoning; for the Mercies of God to us have been many and great, yea, much greater than too many that are round about us. We enjoy the Light of the Gospel with all the Clearness and Freedom, and all other Advantages that ever any People did: God hath given us the best means of Repentance and Salvation, and taken the most effectual course to bring us to them: We have had the Obligations of Mercy to invite us, and the Warnings of Judgments to awaken us, and no means have been left unattempted, to reclaim and make us happy. But if we consider the bad use we have made of all these Favours, and the little effect they have had upon us; we may very well fear his entering into Judgment with us, to deprive us of his Mercies, and to multiply his Plagues upon us; and that we, who with *Capernaum* are lifted up to Heaven in the height of our Privileges, shall be thrown down the deeper into Hell for their Abuse and Mis-improvement.

Lastly, The daily Transgressions of our Lives, by omitting what is requir'd, and committing what is forbidden, may justly cause God to enter into Judgment with us, and call us to an account for them. For if we view the Course of most Mens Lives, we shall find them led not only in a Neglect, but even Contempt of God and his Laws. The Fraud and Deceit, the Injustice and Oppression, the Looseness and Debauchery that abound in the World, may make us complain with *David*, that *there is not one righteous Man left; the faithful fail from among the Children of Men; they are all gone astray, they are altogether become abominable; there is none that doth good, no not one.* And may not the Judg. of all the Earth visit for these things? May not a general Corruption draw on a general Judgment? Undoubtedly he may; and tho his Patience may prolong the time, yet his Justice without Repentance will necessarily bring it on. Of this, the Holy Scripture gives frequent notice to Men of all Ages and Stations.

Because young Men are apt to forget it, *Solomon* minds them of it by way of Sarcasm; *Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth, and let thine Heart cheer thee, &c. but remember that for all these things God will bring thee to Judgment; Eccles. 11. 9.* And aged Men are call'd upon, to consider the near approach of it.



In short then, whether we consider the Right and Authority that God hath to judg all Men, or the just occasion they have all given him so to do, we may easily conclude, that he may enter into Judgment with us when he pleases; which was the first thing propounded.

The *Second* is, That if God proceed to judg us with Rigour, there is none, even of the best of us, that is able to abide the trial, or, as our Text hath it, *no Man living can be justify'd*. To be justify'd, is a judicial Term, and signifies to be found not guilty upon a trial, and to be pronounc'd just and innocent. In this sense, if God enter into a strict and severe Judgment with any of us, there is no Man living can be justify'd: so the Man after God's own heart acknowledges; *If thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme, to mark all that we have done amiss, O Lord, who is able to abide it? that is, none can.* And this is evident,

1<sup>st</sup>, Because all Men are guilty before God: And,

2<sup>dly</sup>, Because there is no hiding any thing from his Knowledge: And,

3<sup>dly</sup>, There is no evading the Sentence, or escaping the Punishment due to it.

1<sup>st</sup>, I say, that all Men living stand guilty before God: *There is none liveth and sinneth not*, saith the Apostle; and *if we say, that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us*, 1 John 1. 8. *In many things we offend all*, saith St. James; yea, the very best of us daily offend both in Thought, Word and Deed. *Who can say his Heart is clean?* saith holy Job; and *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* not one. *The righteous Man falleth seven times a day*, saith Solomon. The Psalmist asks the question, *Who can tell how oft he offendeth?* and prays, *O cleanse thou me from my secret faults*, Psal. 19. 12. In a word, the Scripture concludeth all under Sin; *for we have all sinned, and come short of the Glory of God*. If we had no other proof, our own woful Experience may easily convince us of this sad Truth; so that there is no standing a trial with God, nor any hopes of being justify'd when we are judg'd. And that,

2<sup>dly</sup>, Because there is no hiding of any thing from his Knowledge. Guilty Persons may sometimes escape the Censure of earthly Judges, for want of sufficient Evidence and Information; they cannot always know or see thoroughly into the truth of matters, and so may be sometimes

milled

missed by false Witnesses and bad Juries. But God is an all-seeing and all-knowing Judg; he needs no Evidence or Information, for he is perfectly acquainted with all our doings: *he is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways.* All things are naked and open before him, so that nothing can escape him: He knoweth our Thoughts afar off, and our secret Sins are in the Light of his Countenance. *If thou forget the Name of God (saith the Psalmist) or stretch out thy hand to any strange God, shall not God search it out? for he knoweth the very Secrets of the Heart;* Psal. 44. 20. And how can any guilty Person stand or be justify'd in his sight? especially considering,

3dly, That God is a most just and impartial Judg, and there is no evading of his righteous Sentence. He is of purer eyes than to behold the least Iniquity without the greatest abhorrence and detestation: he is not to be blinded with Bribes, or corrupted with Partiality or Rewards, as earthly Judges may be; but the Judg of all the World will do right, and nothing but Repentance can alter or reverse his Sentence. Tho he be describ'd to be full of Mercy to the Penitent, yet his Justice will not suffer him to acquit the Guilty; and therefore no wilful Sinner can be justify'd at the Bar of his Tribunal: which renders their Case dreadful and remediless, considering,

Lastly, That there is no escaping the Punishment due to their Sins, and denounc'd against them. Earthly Judges may be sometimes too weak to execute their Sentence, and a Combination of Offenders may be too hard for Justice: but God is an all-powerful Judg, and none can escape the reach of his Hand; he can humble the stoutest Sinners, and make the loftiest Offenders stoop and fall before him. *'Tis a fearful thing (saith the Apostle) to fall into the hands of the living God:* For tho the Arms of his Mercy be ready to receive returning Sinners, yet the Hands of his Justice will surely crush obstinate and impenitent Transgressors. And therefore 'twill be in vain for any to stand upon their Terms, or insist upon their Innocence or Justification before God: there is none of us can bear the strict scrutiny of so wise, powerful, and impartial a Judg; and much less, withstand or defeat his Sentence. The most righteous Persons must plead guilty, and submit: and if *the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Sinner and Ungodly appear?*

Thus we see what great reason the Psalmist had to pray; *Lord, enter not into Judgment with thy Servant.* Not that he wholly declin'd the Judgment of God, for we find him sometimes appealing to it, and desiring God to judg him, and not Man; but that which he deprecated, was the Rigour and Strictness of his Judgment: which, he and all Men being Sinners, no flesh living is able to abide; but instead of being justify'd, must be all condemn'd at that Bar. And we too must put up the same Petition, and desire to be dealt with, not with the Strictness and Severity of his Justice, for then we are all lost and undone; but to be judg'd with Favour and Mercy, for 'tis that alone can save us.

To draw to a conclusion; from this Discourse we may learn,

(1.) To cast our selves intirely upon the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Christ, and not expect to be justify'd in God's sight by any thing of our own. 'Twas the Pride and Folly of the *Pharisees*, to look for Justification by the Merit of their own Works, and to think of standing clear before God by the worth of their own Righteousness: whereas the Prophet *Isaiah* makes our best Righteousness to be no better than *filthy Rags and menstruous Cloths*: things odious and loathsom in the sight of God and Men, and apt rather to beget abhorrence, than acceptance with either. The *Pharisees*, for this their Arrogance, were reputed worse than the vilest of Sinners; and our Saviour told them, that Publicans and Harlots should enter into the Kingdom of Heaven before them: which may teach us to renounce our own Merits, and to rely only upon Divine Mercy, and to desire to be found clothed with the white Robes of Christ's Righteousness, rather than clad in the filthy Rags of our own.

Indeed, should God resolve to reckon with us but for the Iniquities of our holy things, and the many Imperfections that attend our best Performances, we were not able to answer him one of a thousand, but might be justly sentenc'd, even for them, to eternal Misery: And if God may deal thus with the green Tree, that hath the Leaves and Blossoms of an outward Profession; what shall be done with the dry, where the very Roots and Branches of Vertue are wholly wither'd and decay'd? In short, the best in the world, if strictly examin'd, will be found faulty;



faulty.; how much less may the worse and viler part of it stand upon their Justification, or plead their own Righteousness? The whole World stand guilty before God of great Enormities, and therefore none of us may pretend to be innocent, or presume to be spared for our own Worthiness. All our hopes of sparing must be founded on God's Mercy, and not our own Purity. Some Sinners may be spared, or else all the World would be condemn'd and perish; and they must be such as are judg'd with Favour, and not with Rigour: which should make us all say, *Enter not into Judgment, &c.*

Lastly, Let us learn from hence to shew that Mercy to others which we ask for our selves, and to be as favourable Judges of them, as we desire God and Men to be of us. It must be very absurd for us, who are great Offenders our selves, and stand in infinite need of Mercy, to be cruel and censorious towards others. Neither can any thing be more unjust and unbecoming, than for Men to be critical and curious in espying faults in their Brethren, when they desire a veil should be cast over their own: How can any expect that Men should cover their Follies, when they blazon those of other Men? or think to have their own Mis-carriages lessen'd or excus'd, when they aggravate and rigorously censure the Failings of their Neighbours? If then we would have God to consider our Infirmities, to make favourable allowances, and to put the best construction upon our Actions; we must do the same to others: If we would not have God to enter into strict Judgment with us, we must take care not to judg strictly our Brethren; for they shall have Judgment without Mercy, who shew no Mercy.



## DISCOURSE XII.

I JOHN I. 8, 9.

*If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us; but if we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*

**T**HIS is the last Sentence prescrib'd to utter in our Prayers, and a very proper and pertinent one it is to that purpose: For till we see our Sins, we shall never confess them; till we confess them, we shall never amend them; and till we amend them, we shall never have them forgiven: so that all our hopes of Mercy and Pardon depend upon a true sight and sense of our Sins. Of this, St. John here seeks to convince us; saying, *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*

The words consist of two Propositions, each of them having an Antecedent and Consequent: the Antecedent of the first is, the saying we have no Sin; the Consequent of that is, the deceiving our selves, and shewing that there is no truth in us. The Antecedent of the second is, the confessing of Sin; the Consequent of that is, the forgiving of it; and cleansing from all Unrighteousness. The one shews the danger of denying, the other the benefit of confessing our Sins. I shall treat of both in these two Propositions, which contain the Sum and Substance of the whole.

*First, That to deny our selves to be Sinners, is to deceive our selves, and to falsify with God and Man.*

*Secondly, That to confess our Sins, is to engage the Truth and Faithfulness of God to pardon and purge us from them. Of each distinctly.*

And,

And, *First*, I say, that to deny our selves to be Sinners, is to put a Cheat upon our selves, and to falsify with God and Man; *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves*, &c. where we are to consider the Sin here mention'd, and the Danger of it. The Sin is, to say, that we have no Sin; or, which is all one, to deny our selves to be Sinners: for to say we have no Sin, is to deny our selves to be Sinners; and they that say or think so, are of all Men the worst and greatest of Sinners, as we shall see after. The Danger is, the deceiving our selves, and making God a Lyar.

For the *1st*, The Sin here mention'd and reprov'd by the Apostle, is, *The saying we have no Sin*, the denying our selves to be Sinners, or the pretending to a State of Purity and Perfection. But are there any such to be found? Yes, there have been, and still are some such vain Persons. St. *John* having, in the 5th Verse of this Chapter, declar'd God to be Light, and that in him was no Darknes at all; tells us in the next Verse, that there were some that walk'd in Darknes, and yet said, *that they had Fellowship with God*, and were Partakers of his Light and Purity. These call'd themselves, *The Perfect*, and were the Persons aim'd at in the Text, who said, *that they had no Sin*. We read of some Hereticks of old, that were so bold and brazen-fac'd, as to say positively, that they had no Sin: Such were the *Cathari*, or Puritans of old; and of this sort were the Followers of *Valentinus*, *Marcus*, *Basilides*, and others, who would not own any Wickedness in themselves, but affirm'd that what was Sin in others, was not so in them. And there have been some in our days, who have boasted of the like Purity and Perfection, that they were free from Sin, and had nothing to charge themselves withal; and there are others, who tho they will not venture to utter this with their Tongue, do yet think or say so in their Heart.

Now the Evil and Danger hereof is here set forth by two things; the *deceiving themselves*, and *making God a Lyar*. First, They that say they have no Sin, *deceive themselves*, and the truth is not in them. All kinds of Fraud and Deceit are hateful and pernicious to Mankind; and none would willingly be impos'd upon or deceiv'd, being both a Reflection upon their Understanding, and an impairing of their Interest. But the deceiving of a man's  
self



self is the worst of all kinds of Deceit; for such a one is both the Deceiver and the Deceived. He does the worst he can to himself, for he wrongs his own Soul, and is necessary to his own Destruction; which is the most foolish, and the most fatal of all Delusions. And yet this is done by all vain Pretenders to Perfection: for *if we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves; we put a Fallacy upon our selves, and become our own Impostors.*

But wherein lies this Self-deceit? Why! in a vain Conception of having that which we have not, and hoping for the Reward of that Purity and Perfection, which belongs not to us. Such Persons dream of golden Mountains, and are merely led on in a Fool's Paradise, feeding themselves with vain Hopes, which end at last in Misery and Disappointment. And all this is done by hearkening to a corrupt Heart, *which is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* Jer. 17. 9.

And as these Pretenders to Perfection put a Cheat upon themselves, so do they put the Lye upon their Maker: thus the next words tell us, *If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a Lyar, and his Word is not in us;* for the Word of God hath concluded all under Sin, saying, that *all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God,* Rom. 3. 13. Our Saviour reprov'd the whole World of Sin, and pronounc'd all Men guilty before God: So that they who pretend to Innocency, and boast of a sinless Purity, contradict the Word of God, and give the Lye to him that is Truth it self; and so shew by their Impostures, that they have neither the Word of God, nor any Truth in them.

But *be not deceiv'd* (saith the Apostle) *God is not mock'd.* They who think or say they have no Sin, will be found of all Men the greatest Sinners; and such as now go about to deceive God and Man with vain Pretences, will in the end appear to have most miserably deceiv'd themselves. The truth of this we find exemplify'd in Holy Scripture in the Church of *Laodicea*, in which there were some that dreamt they had attain'd to such a spotless Perfection, as to be without any Sin or Failing, saying, *I am rich, and increas'd in Goods* both of Body and Mind, bounding with all the Graces of the Spirit, *and have need of nothing;* not knowing that they were all the while wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. 3. 17. They who thought they wanted nothing, indeed lack'd all things:

things: and therefore God Almighty counsel'd them; in the next Verse, *to buy of him Gold try'd in the Fire*; that is, the true knowledge of God and themselves, *that they might be rich indeed*; and *white Raiment*, that is, the Righteousness of Christ, that they may be cloth'd so, as the shame of their Nakedness might not appear. And because they were blind, and could not see, he advises them to *anoint their Eyes with Eye-salve*; that is, with the Light of Divine Truths, that they might see the Error of their ways. For as *the Whole need not the Physician, but they that are Sick*; so they that see not their Sins, will not see their want of a Saviour, nor have recourse to him, and so go on blindfold to their own Destruction.

Thus we see the Folly and Fallacy that they who say they have no Sin put upon themselves; they dangerously *deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them*: which may teach us to beware of such Presumption..

And so much for the first Proposition of the Text. The

*Second* is, That to confess our Sins, is the way to engage the Truth and Faithfulness of God to pardon and purge them away: *If we confess our Sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness*. Where I must shew,

(1.) What this Confession of Sin is.

(2.) That 'tis an Act of Faithfulness and Justice in God to forgive us our Sin upon such a Confession. And,

(3.) That God's pardoning the Guilt of Sin, is attended with his purging away the Pollution of it, and cleansing us from all Unrighteousness.

For the (1.) The confessing of Sin here, as 'tis oppos'd to the saying we have no Sin, is the owning our selves to be Sinners, the displaying of our Iniquities, and acknowledging the Guilt and Heinousness of them. 'Tis to say with David, *I acknowledg my Transgressions, and my Sin is ever before me. Against thee only have I sinned, and done Evil in thy sight. Behold I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me*; Psal. 51. Where he lays open his Sins before God, both original and actual, and sadly bewails and condemns himself for both. So likewise did the penitent Prodigal, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son*. Moreover, to confess our Sins, is not barely to recite them before God as a matter of course or

form,

form, but to aggravate them, and to be fill'd with Sorrow and Remorse for them. 'Tis not to stand upon our Justification, or to plead not guilty, nor much less with the proud *Pharisee* to come with a bold and brazen face unto God; saying, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men, Extortioner or Adulterer, or even as this Publican.* This is in effect to say, I have no Sin. But to confess our Sin, is, with the poor Publican, to *smite upon his Breast*, and with a deep Sense of our own Vileness, to say, *Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner.* And if we do this, our Text tells us, that God is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins: Which will lead us to the

(2.) Next thing propos'd, which was to shew it to be an Act of Faithfulness and Justice in God to pardon Sin upon the Confession of it; for God hath been pleas'd to make this the Condition of Forgiveness, and hath oblig'd himself to grant it upon the performance of that Condition. 'Tis otherwise indeed in earthly Tribunals, where Confession is the Cause of Condemnation; for, Confess, we say, and be hang'd; but 'tis not so at God's Tribunal, where Confession is the Condition of Pardon, for there 'tis, Confess and be sav'd.

Now this Act of Faithfulness in God is founded on the Promises made to that purpose, of which there are many extant in Holy Scripture: As, Prov. 28. 13. *He that confesseth and forsaketh his Sins, shall find Mercy*; that is, the Mercy of Pardon and Forgiveness of them. *Let the Wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts* (saith God by the Prophet *Isaiah*) *and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon*, Isa. 55. 7. *For I, even I am he*, (saith he) *that will blot out thine Iniquities, and will remember thy Sins no more*, Chap. 43. 25. In the New Testament we are often call'd upon to repent and confess our Sins, with a promise of their being blotted out and forgotten.

Now he is faithful that hath promis'd (saith the Apostle) and never faileth those that depend upon him: For God is not a Man that he should lye (saith *Balaam*) nor the Son of Man, that he should repent: Hath he said it, and will he not do it? Hath he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? Numb. 23. 19. The God of Truth cannot falsify or fail of his Word; yea, to secure our Faith in him, he hath back'd his Promises with an Oath, *That by two immutable things,*



things, wherein it is impossible for God to lye, we may have the stronger Assurance and Consolation, Heb. 6. 17, 18. So that if we confess our Sins, we are assur'd to have two of God's Attributes on our side, viz. his Faithfulness and his Justice. As for his Truth and Faithfulness, that stands engag'd to make good the Word that is gone out of his mouth. A Promise, we know, carries the force of a Debt to him, to whom it is made, and lays an Obligation to pay it accordingly. Now *shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Yes, we may safely rely upon his Promise, who can neither deceive nor be deceiv'd. If we come in and confess, and accuse our selves before him, his Truth will oblige him to perform his Promise; which is, to acquit and free us from all Condemnation. 'Tis true, we could not merit or oblige him to such a gracious Promise; 'twas his own free Grace and Goodness that mov'd him to make it; nor could we expect any Favour without it: but now such a Promise is made, we may reasonably plead and expect the fulfilling of it, and we need not entertain the least Doubt of it; for the Text tells us, *If we confess our Sins, he is true and faithful to forgive them.*

Moreover, not only his Truth and Faithfulness, but his Justice and Righteousness too are of our side, and must plead for us; for Christ by his Death and Passion hath purchas'd a Pardon for all penitent Sinners, he hath fully satisfy'd Divine Justice, and obtain'd eternal Redemption for us; he hath paid our Debt to the utmost Farthing, and Justice it self can demand no more. Yea, our Surety having merited a Pardon, and seal'd it to us by his Blood, Justice stands oblig'd to acquit and release us: So our Text adds, *He is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins.*

(3.) But that is not all: the Faithfulness and Justice of God are engag'd not only to forgive us our Sins, by pardoning the Guilt and Punishment of them, but likewise to *cleanse us from all Unrighteousness*, by purging away the Filth and Pollution of them. Sin hath a stain, as well as a guilt; it first defiles, and then destroys the Soul. Now the Justice and Goodness of God oblige him, upon our Confession of Sin, to remove both: he removes the Guilt by his pardoning, and the Filth by his purging Grace; the former is done by the Merits, the latter by the Blood of Christ: So St. John tells us in this Chapter, Ver. 7. *The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all Sin.* The Pollution of Sin must be done away, before we can appear

appear pure in God's sight; and therefore we find *David* praying in his penitential Psalm, *Wash me thoroughly from mine Iniquities, and cleanse me from my Sins*, Psal. 51. 2. And because his Sins were of a deeper dye than ordinary, he prays, *Ver. 7.* saying, *Purge me with Hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than Snow.* This is also promis'd to such as truly confess their Sins, their *Hearts shall be purify'd by Faith*, and their Bodies wash'd in the *Laver of Regeneration*; they shall be sav'd by the washing of Water, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and by both shall be presented pure, and without spot before God. So that Christians may now plead the Satisfaction of Christ for the removing the Punishment, and the Merits of his Blood for taking away the Pollution of Sin, and the cleansing us from all Unrighteousness. From all which we may, by way of Application, infer,

*First*, The exceeding great benefit of Confession: We see it engages the Attributes of God on our side, his Wisdom to contrive, his Power to execute, his Goodness to promise a Pardon, and his Faithfulness to perform it. Neither will his Justice stand in the way to obstruct it: for that being fully satisfy'd by Christ's Sufferings, it can put in no Plea against us; since he hath undergone the Vengeance due to our Sins, Justice cannot exact the Punishment again from us: yea, all its Demands being compleatly answer'd in our stead, it is become our Friend and Advocate, and will be sure to absolve and forgive us. And what an inestimable Blessing and Comfort is it, to stand clear at God's Tribunal, that all our Ghostly Enemies can have nothing to charge against or condemn us? *Blessed is the Man* (saith *David*) *that is in such a case, whose Transgressions are forgiven, and whose Sin is cover'd: Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord imputeth no Sin*, Psal. 32. 1, 2. This is what the Confession of our Sins here intitles us to; which the Truth, Faithfulness and Justice of God are oblig'd to perform now 'tis promis'd; tho none of us could have expected it, if there had been no such Promise made.

*Secondly*, We may infer from hence the extreme Folly of denying or disguising our Sins, which you see is putting a Cheat upon our selves, and deceiving our selves, to our utter Ruin. And yet too many such there are, who flatter themselves with vain pleasing thoughts of their own Innocence,

Innocence, and thereby become as secure as if they were really guiltless: And this proceeds mostly, either from laziness, or from shame or fear. Some thro Incogitancy, or want of Consideration, seldom or never look into their Hearts, or search out the Error of their ways; they will not be at the pains to see how matters stand with their Souls, but go on securely, as if all were well: like some Bankrupts, who are loth to look into their Accounts, lest they should see the Greatness of their Debts, and the Badness of their Condition. There are others, whom Shame restrains from confessing their Sins; and to keep up their Reputation, will deny or dissemble their Impieties. Sin, when it is open, exposes to Shame and Disgrace, and that inclines many rather to conceal than confess it. Again, others deny their Sins, for fear of the Punishment due to them; and this is the Guise and Practice of guilty Persons, who to escape the Penalty of their Crimes, will impudently deny them in the face of God and Man. But this is very foolish and dangerous, and will bring on greater Punishments than those which they thus seek to avoid; as I shall shew hereafter.

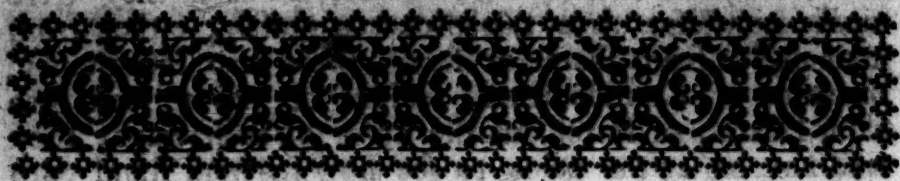
*Thirdly*, From this Discourse we may learn, to keep up a due sense and sight of our Sins, and rather to aggravate than lessen them before God; this is the way to have them pardon'd and put out of God's sight: whereas by denying and disguising them, we provoke him to keep them still in remembrance against us; for thereby we prove Lyars our selves; and, as *St. John* here tells us, even make God a Lyar.

Lastly, We see hence what great Encouragement we have to go and confess our Sins before God; for if we do so, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*

And now I have done with the Sentences that are to precede our Prayers, and shall next go on to the Exhortation appointed to follow them.







*The EXHORTATION to Confession, with the Confession and Absolution.*

DISCOURSE XIII.

JOSHUA VII. 19.

*And Joshua said unto Achan, My Son, give, I pray thee, Glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make Confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done, hide it not from me.*



HAVING finish'd the Sentences of Holy Scripture preparatory to Prayer, and order'd by our Church to be read before our Entrance upon it, I proceed now to the Exhortation that is appointed to follow them; and that begins with the kind and loving Compellation of, *Dearly Beloved Brethren*: A Compellation with which the Apostles frequently began and usher'd in their Exhortations, as may be seen in most of their Epistles. Both St. Peter and St. Paul often us'd this affectionate and courteous Salutation, the better to engage the Attention, and insinuate into the Affections of their Disciples; and thereby the better to instil their Instructions into them. And indeed this is a very proper method to that purpose: for as gentle Showers enter sooner, and pierce deeper than louder Storms; so the milder methods of Love and Kindness prevail more, than the rougher ways of Sharpness and Invectives. And therefore

fore our Church here directs its Ministers to use the same method, willing them to treat their Hearers, not as Enemies or Strangers, but as Brethren, and dearly beloved Brethren; that their Admonitions may appear to proceed from Love, and to be the effects of Kindness and a tender Affection towards them, and thereby make the deeper Impressions upon them.

After this kind and loving Compellation, we may observe here,

*First*, The Matter of the Exhortation, which is a Call to Confession, in these words; *The Scripture moveth us in sundry Places, to acknowledg and confess our manifold Sins and Wickedness.*

*Secondly*, A Caution against cloking and concealing of them, in these words; *And that we should not dissemble or cloke them before the face of Almighty God our Heavenly Father.*

*Thirdly*, The Manner and Qualifications of true Confession, in these words; *But confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent and obedient Heart.*

*Fourthly*, The End and Design of Confession, in these words; *To the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same, by his infinite Goodness and Mercy.*

*Fifthly*, The Time or Seasons of Confession, which the next words tell us, must be in general, at all times; but more especially, *when we assemble and meet together*; for the ends after mention'd.

And, Lastly, The Conclusion, in these words: *Wherefore I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany me with a pure Heart, and humble Voice, saying after me. Of each of these in their Order: And I begin with the*

*First* of them, viz. The Matter of the Exhortation, which is a Call to Confession, in these words; *The Scripture moveth us in sundry Places, to acknowledg and confess our manifold Sins and Wickedness.* Of this I shall speak at present, from these words of Joshua to Achan; *My Son, I pray thee, give Glory unto God, and make Confession unto him, &c.* The occasion of the words was from Achan's Sin about the accursed thing, in purloining the Wedg of Gold, and *Babylonish* Garment in the Camp of Israel, contrary to God's express Command; which pro-

vok'd him to forsake the *Israelites*, and to make them turn their backs upon their Enemies. Whereupon *Joshua* first besought the Lord, to know the cause of his Displeasure; and then turn'd to *Achan*, to confess his Sin unto the Lord, and restore the stolen Goods, to avert his Anger from them; saying unto him, *My Son, I pray thee*: where *Joshua* likewise prefaces his Exhortation with the endearing title and relation of Son; my Son, signifying it to be as the Advice of a Father to a Son, which is ever the most affectionate and best-design'd Counsel, as coming from the tender Love and Bowels of a Parent. And that too he ushers rather by Intreaty than Command, which is the likeliest way to prevail; *My Son, I pray thee, give Glory unto the Lord God of Israel, and make Confession unto him*: which is as if he had said, thou hast dishonour'd God by thy Sin, and made him to withdraw his Aid and Assistance from us; now therefore give Glory to him, by a sincere Confession, that he may turn away his Wrath, and return again to us. And not only so, but tell me what thou hast done, and hide it not from me. Where we are minded of a twofold Confession: The one unto God, *Make Confession unto him*; the other unto Men, *And tell me what thou hast done, hide it not from me*. The First of these is that we are chiefly call'd to in this Exhortation, viz. the confessing our Sins unto God. To this, our Church tells us, *the Scripture moveth us in sundry Places*; some of which I have formerly mention'd, both from the Old and New Testament: The Church in these words signifying to us, that the Minister, in delivering his Message, is not to rely upon his own Authority, for that will prevail little; but to urge the Authority of God in Holy Scripture, and to come arm'd with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and that will persuade and pierce deep into the Heart. In treating then of these words, I shall shew,

- I. The Nature of Confession, what it is. And,
- II. How we are thereby said to *give Glory unto God*.
- III. After which I shall add a word or two, touching Confession unto Men, to which *the Scripture likewise moveth us in sundry Places*.

I. Then, of the Nature of Confession, which may thus be defin'd: 'Tis an Act of the Soul, whereby it displays



plays or lays open its Sins before God, and heartily bewails its Weakness and Folly in committing them.

I stile it, (1.) An Act of the Soul, because it is fram'd within, and comes from the Heart; for tho it be utter'd by the Mouth and the Tongue, according to that of the Apostle, *With the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation*; yet the Heart is the first Mover, or the Spring that sets the Tongue in motion. *Out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh* (saith our Saviour) and our Confession must proceed from thence; or else 'tis rather an idle Compliment, than Confession, and is no better than Hypocrisy and Lip-labour. We find God Almighty upbraiding some of the *Israelites*, for coming and confessing their Sins, *and sitting before him as his People*, when their *Hearts were far from him*; for which reason he rejected their Service, and bid them *bring no more such vain Oblations*. True Confession is hearty and sincere, and is therefore stil'd an Act of the Soul, that being the Rise and Seat of it.

Again, (2.) I stile it an Act of the Soul, whereby it *displays and lays open its Sins before God*; not by way of Information, for he knows the Secrets of our Hearts, and is privy to all our ways, and so needs no Information; but by way of Humiliation and Self-abasement before the Divine Majesty, for breaking his righteous and holy Laws. The words of the Church are, *To acknowledg and confess our manifold Sins and Wickedness*: where tho to acknowledg and confess are commonly taken to import the same thing; yet some would nicely distinguish them, by making the acknowledging a Fault, to be the owning or granting it upon an Accusation, (as *David*, when charg'd home by *Nathan*, said, *I have sinned*) but confessing to be a voluntary Act, when no Man accuseth. And this seems to be the more free and ingenuous, and consequently the most acceptable way of laying open our Faults before God.

But however that be, the Matter of Confession is here said to be, *our manifold Sins and Wickedness*: Which words imply a variety of Transgressions, or the different kinds and degrees of Sin and Wickedness; whereof some are greater, and some less; some are more open, and others more secret: all which, of what sort or degree soever, are to be acknowledg'd and confess'd before God, with all the Circumstances and Aggravations of them.

Lastly, I stile it an Act of the Soul, whereby we not only disclose our Sins before God, but heartily *bewail our Weakness and Folly in committing them.* This is a necessary Act and Concomitant of Confession, to manifest the Truth and Reality of it, and that we are inwardly and heartily affected with it. Accordingly we find *David* often complaining of his Folly and Weakness in all his Mis-carriages: *So foolish was I and ignorant (saith he) yea even as a Beast before thee.* And *St. Peter*, after his denying of his Saviour, *went out and wept bitterly.* And this hath been the course of all true Penitents: Not that our Heavenly Father delights in the pitiful Moans, in the Tears and Lamentations of his Creatures; for he is not subject to Passions as we are, nor is he to be wrought upon by complimentary Forms, by the Accents of Mens Voices, or the Rhetorick of Tears, or any thing of that nature; but only expects these things as tokens of Contrition, and signs of that inward sense of Shame and Sorrow, which we ought to have for what we have done against him. This is briefly the Nature, and these are the Effects of true Confession; which is truly reckon'd a part both of Repentance and Prayer.

II. But how are we said to give Glory to God, by making such Confession to him? Why! not that we can make any addition to his essential Glory, which admits of no increase or decrease by any thing that we can say or do, but that we hereby do what in us lies, to vindicate the Honour of his Attributes, and the Authority of his Laws, from the Affronts that our Sins cast upon both. This is the Glory we give to God by Confession, and other Acts of Repentance: for whereas the Evil of Sin lies chiefly in the Dishonour it reflects upon the Divine Perfections, such penitential Acknowledgments made to the Divine Majesty, do in some measure repair the Injury, and, as far as we can, restore and raise the Glory of all his Attributes, as will be evident, by taking a short view of some of them. As,

(1.) Sin is an Invasion of God's Sovereignty and Authority over us; for he that wilfully breaks his Laws, does in a manner disclaim his Authority, and would be at his own disposal: He says, in effect, with *Pharaoh*, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his Voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey him:* Or with them in the Gospel, *We will not have him to reign over us.* Now penitent



tent Confession makes some amends for this Indignity, by bringing us to Submission, and making us yield and stoop to him; whereby we retract the Injury, and settle him again in his Authority over us, and so give him the Glory of his Sovereignty.

Again, (2.) Sin is an Impeachment of God's Wisdom; for he that obstinately violates any Law, virtually impeaches the Wisdom of him that made it, as if he had not allow'd that liberty that he might, nor order'd matters so wisely as he should, but had tied them up to unnecessary strictness and severities; and therefore he will direct himself, and do as he thinks fit. This is the sense of worldly and voluptuous Persons, who say with them in *Job*, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Now an humble Confession revokes this Affront, by taking the shame and folly of our Sins to our selves, and justifying the Wisdom of God's Laws, and so gives God the Glory of his Wisdom.

Moreover, (3.) Sin is an Affront to the Omniscience and All-seeing Eye of God; for he that allows himself in the committing of any Sin, does in effect say with them in the Psalms, *Tush! how should God perceive it? Is there knowledge in the most High?* Or with them in *Job*, *How doth God know? Can he judge thro the dark Clouds? No, thick Clouds are a Covering to him that he see not; Job 22. 13, 14.* The Consideration of an All-seeing Eye, will prove a great check to our Lusts, and mightily curb the extravagance of our Ways. We see the Eye and Observation of a Man like our selves, yea of a Child, will lay some Restraint upon us; how much more should the apprehension of God's Eye being still upon us, keep us from sinning against him? So that to go on resolutely in our evil ways, is tacitly to deny God's Omniscience; to think that he neither sees nor minds the Actions of Men, or will not be troubled or concern'd with what they do; which is to make him at best but an idle and careless Spectator of the Affairs of the World: whereas by confessing and bewailing our Sins, we own his all-seeing Eye, and shew our sense and awe of his Presence and Oversight of us, and thereby give him the Glory of his Omniscience. Furthermore,

(4.) Sin is an Affront to the Omnipotence and infinite Power of God, as if he were not able to punish our Misdeeds; which made the Apostle ask the question, *Do we*



*provoke the Lord to Jealousy? Are we stronger than he?* He that goes on wilfully in his Wickedness, seems to defy the Power of his Maker, and to think he could stand it out with him, if he should challenge him for it: which is a plain defiance to him, and bidding him do his worst. Whereas by a penitent Acknowledgment of our Faults, we shew a due Sense of our own Weakness, and Inability to contend with him; and thereby keep up the Fear of God before our eyes, and so give him the Glory of his Power. Again,

(5.) Sin is an Indignity offer'd to the Justice of God; as if his Laws were unjust and unequal, exacting more and harder Service than we were reasonably bound to pay: and therefore the obstinate Offender resolves to take his own measures, and to do no more than he thinks he hath just reason for; which is a high Reflection upon the Honour and Equity of the Divine Laws. Whereas by confessing our Sins, we do right to the Justice of God, and own his Laws to be, as indeed they are, *holy, just, and good*; we acknowledg God to be *righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works*; and that his *Ways are equal, and our Ways unequal*: which is to give God the Glory of his Justice.

Lastly, To mention no more, Sin is an Abuse or Affront to the Goodness of God, and perverts the End and Design of all his Mercies. The End of God's Blessings is to engage us to a more chearful Obedience, and to lead Sinners to Repentance: and to use them otherwise, as Encouragements to Vice, and to harden them in Impenitence, is to cross the Intentions of the Bestower, and to turn the Instances of his Favour into the Instruments of his Dishonour; which is a vile Abuse of the Divine Goodness. Now by confessing and amending such Ingratitude, we do as far as possible retrieve the Honour of the Benefactor, and so give God the Glory of his Goodness.

Thus we see the Nature of Confession, with the manner of its giving Glory to God, and vindicating the Honour of all his Attributes. But beside this, there is,

III. Another sort of Confession, to be made in some cases unto Men; which tho it be not particularly mention'd in this Exhortation, yet being pointed at in our Text, and reckon'd a necessary part of Repentance, I shall not wholly pass it by.

*Josbua* here in this Advice to *Achan*, wills him first to make Confession to God, and thereby give him the Glory, of which he had robb'd him by his Theft and Diffimulation: And next calls upon him to confess his Fault unto him, saying, *Tell me what thou hast done, and hide it not from me.*

To this kind of Confession, the Scripture likewise moveth us in sundry places. I shall mention but one, because it is full to the purpose; and that is, *James 5. 16. Confess your Faults one to another, and pray one for another.* Where the Apostle exhorts Men to a mutual Acknowledgment of their Faults, the better to pray and prevail for a Pardon for one another. And here we may note, that tho all Sins are committed against God, as being Transgressions of his just and righteous Laws; yet there are some that may be said to be more directly and immediately against him, as Idolatry, profaning of God's Name and Sabbath, Contempt of his Word and Worship, with the other Sins against the first Table; in which we may say with *David, Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight.* And in these, a Confession to God alone may be sufficient. But there are other Sins more directly and immediately against our Neighbour, as committing violence on his Person, Rapine on his Goods, or Slander on his Name; in all which cases, great injury and damage being done to him, we are requir'd not only to make confession of it unto God, whose Laws are thereby violated, but likewise to our Neighbour, who is thereby greatly injur'd. And this is to be done, partly for the Ease of our own Mind; partly for the Satisfaction of the injur'd Party; and partly likewise to preserve Peace and Reconciliation among Men.

(1.) I say, we are to confess our Sins to Men, in case of Wrongs done to them, for the Ease and Quiet of our own Minds: for Sin is sometimes a great Burden to the Conscience, it lies heavy upon it, and presses it sore; and nothing can better discharge it of this Load, than a free and hearty Confession. This, we find, hath been ever the practice of true Penitents, who have always found ease and comfort by it; and 'twere well if it were more practis'd.

(2.) Confession is to be made to Men, for the reparation of Damages done to them. The Love we owe to Mankind, obliges us to do all the good Offices we can to all Men; and if we have injur'd any in Body, Goods, or Name,

Name, we are to make all possible amends, by acknowledging the Wrong, and repairing it to the utmost of our power: like *Zaccheus*, who made a publick Satisfaction for all his Extortion, and restor'd four-fold for all the Goods he had unjustly taken away or gotten.

Lastly, Confession must be sometimes made unto Men, to procure and preserve Peace and Reconciliation with Mankind. The Apostle wills us, *as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all Men*; which cannot sometimes be without acknowledging our Faults one to another. And therefore, among other ways of effecting it, we must not leave this altogether undone.

Thus I have explain'd the first thing to be observ'd in this Exhortation, *viz.* A Call to Confession; which is to be made first and chiefly unto God, who is principally injur'd in all our Transgressions; and then to Men, in case of any Wrongs or Offences committed against them: both which are to be duly observ'd.

I shall proceed to what follows, in my next.

## DISCOURSE XIV.

PROVERBS XXVIII. 13. former part.

*He that covereth his Sins, shall not prosper.*

**I** AM explaining to you the Exhortation, that follows the preparatory Sentences to Prayer, in our publick Liturgy; in which I observ'd,

*First*, The Matter of the Exhortation, which is to the Duty of Confession, in these words; *The Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledg and confess our manifold Sins and Wickedness.* Of which I treated the last time. I proceed now,

*Secondly*, To the Caution added to it, against cloking and covering our Sins, in the next words; *And that we should not dissemble nor cloke them before the face of Almighty God our heavenly Father.* Of which I shall speak at this time, from these words of *Solomon*; *He that covereth his Sins shall not prosper.* In which words the Wise-man,

I. Sup-



I. Supposes the Proneness of Mankind to cover and conceal their Sins: *He that covereth his Sins.*

II. He expresses the Danger of so doing, saying, that they who do so, *shall not prosper.* Which things shall be the Subject of our present Discourse. And,

I. *Solomon* here plainly intimates, that Men are but too apt to cover and cloke their Sin; and indeed daily experience shews this to be too frequent and common a practice. 'Twas a fault from the beginning: for when our first Parents had transgress'd the Command of God, by eating the forbidden Fruit, they presently hid themselves among the Trees of the Garden, and gather'd Fig-leaves to cover the Nakedness of their Sin; seeking (as one hath observ'd) to cover that Shame with the Leaves of one Tree, which they had contracted from the Fruit of another. And their Posterity hath shared the Shame, as well as the Guilt of their Disobedience; which hath made them study to dissemble and cloke their Sins ever since, as may be easily seen in all sorts of Sinners.

But how are Men wont to cover and conceal their Sins? Why, this being a Mystery of Iniquity, is best known to them that practise it: however, there are two obvious ways, whereby Sinners are used to do it; and they are,

Either by acting them secretly and out of sight, to avoid discovery; or by framing Excuses and Apologies for them, to lessen their Guilt.

1<sup>st</sup>, I say, Men are wont to hide their Sins, by acting them secretly and out of sight: *Every one that doeth evil (saith St. John) hateth the Light, neither cometh he to the Light; lest his deeds should be discover'd;* Joh. 3. 20. He that is most eagerly bent upon the pursuit of his Lusts or his Interest, is yet willing to escape the eye of discovery and observation: and here should we trace the steps of all sorts of Sinners, we should be led into corners, and made to follow them into recesses and darkness. *They that are drunk (saith the Apostle) are drunk in the night. The Adulterer watches the Twilight (saith Solomon:)* The deceitful Person chuses the dark Shop: The Hypocrite puts on and wears about the Cloke of Religion: The Traitor shelters himself under Oaths and Arts of Secrecy. And all of them seek to hide the Evil and Error of their ways, by acting them out of sight: *Mens loving Darkness rather than Light,*

*Light, is because their Deeds are evil; call'd therefore the Works or Deeds or Darknefs.*

2dly, Another way of covering of Sins, is by framing Excuses and Apologies for them. If after all these Arts, it so happen, that Mens Vices force their way out, and break into discovery, as Truth oft-times will out, and like the Sun break thro the Clouds that seem to obscure and conceal it; yet then do they fly to all manner of Subterfuges, and labour hard to disguise and extenuate what they are loth to acknowledg. How do many in such cases torture their Wits to find out Excuses, and put their Invention upon the rack to be supply'd with Apologies? And 'tis easy to observe, how ready Satan is to furnish them with Evasions, and how a corrupt Heart will never suffer them to want Pleas and Pretences for the worst of Crimes. Sometimes they will shift off the Guilt upon one another, as *Adam* did upon *Eve*, and *Eve* upon the Serpent, to keep off the blame from themselves. Sometimes they will plead Ignorance of their Duty, or Inability to perform it; or else put it upon Surprize, or the Power of Temptation, and the like, to palliate and dissemble their Wickedness. At other times they urge all the lessening Pleas and Circumstances they can think of; as, It was the first time, I was merely misled, The Effects of it were not very evil, Many have done worse: yea, any thing rather than suffer the Sin to appear so great and heinous as it is. So prone is Mankind to dissemble and cloke their Iniquities! which is a thing so plain and evident in the practice of all Offenders, that it would but upbraid the Sense and Experience of all Men, to attempt any farther proof of it.

But how comes it to pass, that Men are so prone to cover and excuse their Sins? Why, of this several accounts may be given; as,

(1.) This proceeds from the natural Uglinefs and Deformity of Sin, which cannot bear the light, nor endure to be seen in its own shape. Beauty, we know, neither needs painting, nor seeks to it; 'tis willing to be seen in its own colours, and rather courts than flies observation: whereas Deformity covets a vizer, and labours to shelter and recommend it self by borrow'd colours. In like manner, Vertue hath a lustre of its own, that needs no varnish; and such is the native Beauty of Holiness, that it desires nothing either to cover or adorn it: whereas Vice is in it self so foul and odious a thing, that none can behold it in  
its



its own shape without loathing and abhorrence ; and hence it comes to pass, that either it industriously skulks and hides its head, or else puts on some artificial colours and pretences to recommend it. For all Sin is opposite to, and destructive of the Image of God stamp't upon us: 'tis the reproach of our Reason, and utterly defaces the Purity and Perfection of our Nature : we never commit it, but we contradict our own Sentiments, and affront the best Friend and Benefactor we ever had. And these things carry that innate Pravity and Deformity in them, that 'tis no wonder that Men should be so studious and industrious to conceal them.

(2.) The Shame and Disgrace that Sin is attended withal, is another cause of covering and concealing it : for all Sin reflects and carries a Disparagement with it ; which, considering how tender all Men are of their Reputation, and how naturally touch'd with the Sense of Honour, must needs put them upon all ways of hiding and excusing it. And here I may appeal to general Sense and Experience of all Persons and Places : Is not Vice every where condemn'd, and mark'd with a brand of Infamy ? Does it not create shame and blushing, and bespatter the Name and Memory of all that practise it ? Yea, does not the bare Suspicion of Vice sink and diminish the Honour of all other Accomplishments ? And how difficult is it to support a Reputation that is blasted and undermin'd by Jealousies and Surmises ? And if the bare Suspicion does detract so much, what a heavy Load of Reproach and Infamy must the open Impieties of a dissolute Life expose to ? And that too, not only among a few knowing and judicious Persons, but with all Mankind ; who generally agree in marking Sin with dishonour, and fixing disgrace on the Brow that practises it : which shews it to be no strange thing, that Men should thus study to hide their Wickedness, and seek to escape the Shame that attends it.

(3.) The great Prejudice or bad Influence that bare-fac'd Iniquity hath upon Mens worldly Concerns, is another Reason of their great care to hide and conceal it : for human Nature still retains that abhorrence of Sin, that makes them abandon such as openly avow and practise it. Should the Fraud of the deceitful Person and Flatterer appear, every one would shun them as publick Evils, and renounce all Commerce and Conversation with them. Should Schism and Sedition appear in their own bloody colours,



colours, all Men would detest and abhor them: and therefore all that will have recourse to those Sins, to promote any worldly Interest, must cover or colour them over with some specious Pretences, without which they can never hope to succeed. If *Ahab* will have *Naboth's* Vineyard, *Jezebel* must proclaim a Fast, and by a shew of Piety hallow and disguise the Oppression; and then he may take away his Life and his Possessions together. *Jehu* must proclaim his Zeal for the Lord of Hosts, if he mean to compass the Destruction of the House of *Ahab*; and under those fair colours he may act that, which otherwise the Blackness of the Crime would betray to Discovery and Disappointment.

Moreover, lastly, the Devil hath a great hand in Mens dissembling and cloking their Sins, to rob God of the Honour, and us of the Benefit of confessing them. 'Tis a Lesson in Satan's School, that we may commit one Sin to cover another: thus *Saul* fram'd an Untruth, to excuse his Disobedience to God's Command, 1 *Sam.* 15. 15. And *Ananias*, by Satan's Suggestion, lyed unto the Holy Ghost to conceal his Sacrilege, *Acts* 5. 3. And still Theft is often excus'd by Lying, and Rebellion cover'd by Hypocrisy and a Cloke of Religion; tho such rebellious Children are severely threaten'd, who *take counsel, but not of the Lord, and cover with a covering, but not of his Spirit, that they may add Sin to Sin*; *Isa.* 30. 1.

Besides, 'tis a piece of Satan's Policy, not to suffer Sin to appear abroad without a vizer; for should it be seen in the Blackness and Deformity of its own shape, it would deter all Men from committing it. And therefore Satan not only transforms himself into an Angel of Light, but transforms his Temptations too, covering them with the most specious and plausible Appearances, that they may the better allure and take with those against whom they are laid.

Thus we see the Proneness of Mankind to cover and excuse their Sins, with some of the Reasons and Motives that induce them so to do.

But is this a wise or safe course? The Answer to that will bring me to the Second Thing propounded; and that is, the Danger and Folly of dissembling and cloking our Sins, for they that do so *shall not prosper*. Prosperity is a thing desir'd and courted by most Men, and yet the right way

way to it is mistaken by many: the general Cry is, *Who will shew us any Good?* when they frequently seek and expect it from the Root of all Evil. The Wise-man here tells us, that the covering and cloking our Wickedness is no way to it, but leads to the quite contrary; for they that take this course shall not prosper. He had observ'd the many Stratagems and Devices used to get the Wealth and Preferments of this World, how crafty Men hugg'd and applauded their own Invention, and what great things they expected from the Success of them; and yet all ended at last in Disappointment, and tended only to their own Decay. A slender Observation may serve to satisfy us in this great Truth; for whatever designing Men may vainly promise themselves from the little Artifices of this kind, they soon find their Hopes defeated, and rather fall than rise by such methods; all the Good they expected from them soon vanishes, and all the Evil they thought to escape, lighteth upon their heads. The Privacy in which they carry'd on and conceal'd their Wickedness, exposes them to the more publick Shame; and the Darknes they affected, only leads them to blacker and outer Darknes. The artificial Colours they put upon their Sins, add to them the deeper and more crimson dye; which serves only to bring on them the greater blushing and confusion of face: and sure that can be no way to Prosperity, that thus dashes all our Hopes and Endeavours after it. And that so it is, we daily see.

Now of this known Truth, three or four Reasons may be given:

1<sup>st</sup>, Because all the Wit of Man cannot hide their Sins from the sight of God.

2<sup>dly</sup>, No Art can conceal them from their own Conscience.

3<sup>dly</sup>, 'Tis very difficult to hide them long from the Knowledge of Men.

4<sup>thly</sup>, If that may be done, yet shall they be shortly publish'd before Angels and Men.

1<sup>st</sup>, I say, all the Wit of Man cannot cover or conceal their Sins from the sight of God; for he knows the very Secrets of the Heart, and our Thoughts are not hid from him: *All things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do*; and he is privy to all our ways. Those thin Veils that hinder the short sight of frail Men, are to him as transparent as the Air, and cannot bar the prospect of his all-seeing Eye. The Darknes is no Dark-

ness

ness to him, for he is all Light, and Night and Day to him are both alike: *He that made the Eye* (saith the Psalmist) *shall not he see?* And *he that made the Hand, cannot he punish?* And what matter is it, if thou hide thy Faults from weak Men, whilst they are so perfectly known to Almighty God, who is the great Judg and Avenger of them?

Indeed, couldst thou blind the Eyes of Omniscience, or get out of the reach of his sight and power; it might be worth the while to study the Arts of Secrecy and Concealment: but since there is no shutting his all-seeing Eye, nor stopping his avenging Hand, 'tis a vain Presumption to rely upon hopes either of Privacy or Impunity. And how is it possible to prosper by provoking him, who is the sole Author and Cause of all Prosperity? Again,

2dly, No Art of Man can hide their Sins from the Knowledge of their own Conscience, which can give them no Rest or Peace whilst the Guilt of them lies upon it; and what Prosperity can there be without, when there is nothing but Anguish and Perplexity within? Every one carries about him a Register or Monitor of all his ways, which faithfully records and brings to mind all his Misdeeds: it keeps a constant Court of Justice in the Breast, where it does the offices both of an Accuser, Witness, and Judg; by which means it is privy to all our Actions, and will surely condemn and lash us even for the most secret Sins, which all the World beside are strangers to. And what matter is it, if thou conceal thy Sins from the eyes of others, when thou canst not keep them from this severe and impartial Judg in thy own bosom? Indeed, a good Conscience is a continual Feast, and entertains the Soul with constant Supplies of fresh Joys and Satisfaction; but a guilty Mind is a continual Tormentor, and ever racks and galls it with endless Trouble and Despair. *Cain* from hence felt a Punishment greater than he could bear; and *Judas*, without any Accuser but himself, prov'd his own Judg and Executioner. 'Twas therefore good Advice of a wise Hea-then, *καὶ ὁ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τὴν συνείδησιν*; Above all things, revere thy self, and stand in awe not only of the Censure of the World, but of the closer Inspection of thy own Conscience, which will be sure to accuse and condemn thee for thy most secret Iniquities. To which we may add,

3dly, The great Difficulty of hiding Sin long from the Knowledge of Men. This is what Sinners seem to fear  
above



above all other things, and oft-times puts a check upon them, when neither the Fear of God nor the Terrors of Conscience can do any good with them. Know then, vain Man, that however thou mayst palliate and conceal thy Sin a while, 'twill e'er long surely find thee out, and expose thee to all that Shame and Misery, thou seekest so carefully to avoid. Sin is of that inconsistent nature, that it frequently betrays it self, and breaks out thro those thin Veils that are made to hide it. *Solomon* tells us, that *he that perverteth his way shall be known.* The Sinner often losing himself in the windings of his own Craft, is brought into the light before he is aware. *A lying Tongue* (saith the same Wise-man) *is but for a moment*: It may serve a present turn, but seldom or never lasts long. So incoherent a thing is Falshood and Hypocrisy, that they frequently disclose their own Nakedness; the Mask many times falls off of it self, and the Cloke by long wearing, becomes so thredbare, that the Hypocrisy appears thro the thinness of the covering. So that 'tis almost impossible to shelter their Vices long under the most artificial colours and pretences. *If thou do evil* (saith God) *Sin lieth at the door*: tho it be acted in the secret Chambers, yet shall it become as visible as a thing that lieth before the door, where every one may see it. Yea, our Saviour goes farther, and tells us, it *shall be publish'd on the house-top.* By which it appears, that there is no driving on a trade of Sin long, tho ever so secret, without discovery; and consequently that 'tis no way to prosper. Which will be more evident by considering,

Lastly, That tho it were possible to hide Sin here from the eyes of Men, and to put such a thick covering over it, as could not be remov'd or seen through; yet hereafter it shall be openly publish'd to all the world, and expos'd for ever to the view of Angels and Men. And what advantage is it to conceal it for a while, when shortly a black Bill of our most hidden Iniquities shall be publicly read before us? When the secret Frauds of the Shop, and the closer Abominations of the Chamber, shall be set in order before them, and made to stare them in the face? The time is coming, when the Hypocrite's vizor shall be pluck'd off, and all that paint and varnish taken away, by which he now beguiles unstable Souls; when Schism and Faction shall appear bare-fac'd, and all Men shall see the Blackness of those Crimes, that are now acted and colour'd over with fair Pretences. Then *the Sinners in Zion will be afraid*

(saith the Prophet) *Fearfulness will surprize the Hypocrite, Isa. 33. 14.* When all Clokes and Disguises shall be remov'd, they will find themselves only cloth'd with Shame, and cover'd over with their own Confusion as with a Cloke. They that hide their Sins now, will then call to the Mountains to hide them, and the Rocks to cover them from the presence of God and Men. Think then, thou that now presumest upon Secrecy, and daily employest thy Wit to palliate and dissemble the Evil of thy ways; think, I say, what will become of thee, when all these things shall be brought to light, and every Circumstance of them aggravated against thee. Will any of these thin Veils, think you, endure the flames of God's Wrath; or what Covering wilt thou betake thy self to, when all these Fig-leaves will take fire, and flame about thee? This will be the sad and unavoidable Consequence of cloking and dissembling of Sin, and is sufficient to convince any reasonable Man of the truth of what the Wise-man here affirms, that *he that covereth his Sin shall not prosper.*

And now what remains, but that we carefully shun this evil and dangerous Practice, of concealing and excusing of Sin? Let us, in the first place, shun those things that need a Covering; remembering that 'tis beneath the Dignity of a Man, to do what he dares not own, and to have recourse to mean pitiful shifts to hide the Obliquity of his Actions. But if we have been unhappily drawn or betray'd into Evil, let us rather disclose than dissemble it; knowing that we double the Guilt and hinder the Pardon by hiding or excusing it, and that the best way to have our Sins cover'd, is to lay them open before God; for that will engage him to cover them with the Robes of Christ's Righteousness, which will cover a multitude of Sins, and hide them for ever from the sight of God and Men: And *blessed is the Man whose Sin is thus cover'd, and to whom the Lord imputeth no Sin.* To which Blessedness, God of his mercy bring us all, for the Merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE





## DISCOURSE XV.

PROVERBS XXVIII. 13. latter part.

*But whoso confesseth and forsaketh his Sins, shall have Mercy.*

**I** Discours'd the last time of the Caution given by the Church against *dissembling and cloking our Sins, before the face of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father*; from those words of Solomon, *He that covereth his Sins shall not prosper*. From which I shew'd some of the many ways of covering of Sin, together with the extreme Danger and Folly of using them. I come now to the

*Third thing observ'd in the Exhortation*; and that is, the Manner and Qualifications of true Confession, in those words: *But confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient Heart*. Together with the next thing, *viz.* the End and Design of confessing, in the following words: *To the end we may obtain Forgiveness of the same, by his infinite Goodness and Mercy*. Of both which I shall now treat from the words of our Text; *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his Sins, shall have Mercy*. Where we have,

I. The Manner and Qualifications of true Confession; *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his Sins*. Where confessing of Sin is join'd with the forsaking it; and in the *Exhortation, with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient Heart*. From both we shall have the due Qualifications and Properties of true Confession. And,

II. We have the Benefit or Reward annex'd to it: they that do so, *shall have Mercy*, saith the Text; *They shall obtain Forgiveness of the same by his infinite Goodness and Mercy*, saith the *Exhortation*. But before I enter upon them, I shall premise one or two things.

1<sup>st</sup>, That Confession of Sin is both private and publick; the one is to be made in the Closet, the other in the Church.



Church. In the private Confessions of the Closet, we are to lay before God all our particular Wants and Transgressions, charging our selves home with the Guilt of all our Sins both open and secret, and enlarging our selves on all the Circumstances and Aggravations of them.

In the publick Confessions of the Church, we are to join in the general Confession of Sins, that are common to all Men, without descending to particulars, of which perhaps some in the Congregation cannot accuse themselves. For tho' all Men are guilty before God, yet all Men are not guilty alike of the same Transgressions: and therefore our general and common Guilts must be the sole Subject of publick Confession, that all Men may join in it; and our particular Failings and Miscarriages are to be laid open before God in our more private and secret Confessions.

2dly, Our Confessions, both publick and private, must be free and ingenuous, proceeding from Love and a filial Fear of offending our heavenly Father, not forc'd and extorted by a servile Fear of the Lash and the Rack; the one is like that of Sons, the other of Servants and Slaves. For God *loveth a cheerful Giver*, and expects that all the Service and Devotion we pay to him should flow from a voluntary Freedom and Readiness of Mind; but hates those unwilling Sacrifices that must be dragg'd to the Altar. *The Love of God constraineth us*, saith the Apostle: Love must be the Cord to draw us to Confession, and the Spring to set the Tongue in motion; 'tis that inclines God to lend an ear to it, and renders it *a living, holy, and acceptable Sacrifice unto him*.

And now having premis'd these two things, I come to the Qualifications of true Confession, as they are describ'd here in the Exhortation of the Church, and imply'd in the words of the Text; both which require us, to *confess with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient Heart*. Where we may observe,

1st, That true Confession comes from the Heart, to signify that it must be hearty and sincere: 'Tis not from the Mouth or Lip only, for that will make it to be no better than Lip-labour, or a Matter of Form, said only by rote; but it must proceed from the inward Motion and Affections of the Heart: *My Son, give me thy Heart*, saith God, *Prov. 23. 26*. He calls not for the Ear, or the Tongue only,

only, to hear or recite the words of Confession; for all that may be but Hypocrisy and Dissembling, unless the Heart be affected and go along with it. God Almighty hates to see Men come and sit before him as his People, bestowing many good words upon him, and many bad ones upon themselves, with a dejected Countenance bemoaning and lamenting their Wickedness, when all the while the Heart is afar off, and is not touch'd with any thing they say. Such formal Confessions are no better than begging leave farther to offend, and instead of lessening, do but add to the Number and Guilt of our Offences. *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart (saith the Psalmist) the Lord will not hear me.*

Hence we find God Almighty rejected the Sacrifices and Oblations, the New Moons, and Solemn Meetings of the *Israelites*; because they *drew nigh him with their Lips, when their Hearts were far from him.* Neither may we wonder, if such vain heartless Acknowledgments find no acceptance with God, which we perceive have little or no effect upon our selves: for who values a known Hypocrite, or values the words of a Dissembler? Confession then must be hearty and sincere, and we must be sensibly touch'd with what we confess, if we mean it should have any effect with God or Man.

2dly, As Confession must come from the Heart, to testify its Sincerity; so must it come from an humble Heart, to shew its Humility: for *God resisteth the Proud, and gives his Grace only to the Humble.* This we may see in the Confessions of the proud Pharisee, and the poor Publican; the one comes rather to magnify than to debase himself before God, saying, *God I thank thee, that I am not as other Men, nor even as this Publican:* and for thus exalting himself, he was abas'd. The other comes with a deep Sense of his own Vileness, and scarce venturing to lift up his eyes unto Heaven, smote upon his breast, saying, *Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner!* and he for humbling himself was exalted, as we read, *Luke 18.* So the prodigal Son having a low Opinion of himself, and thinking a Servant's place too good for him, who had forfeited the Favour and Title of a Son, had his Confession accepted, and himself receiv'd into extraordinary Favour, *Luke 15.* Till we entertain mean thoughts of our selves, we can never confess heartily; and when we do so, we cannot fail of Audience: for *the Lord heareth the Desire of the Humble, he prepareth their Heart,*



and his Ear hearkeneth thereto; Psal. 10. 17. He delights in a humble and contrite Spirit, and none rise higher in his Opinion, than such as are lowest in their own; the second Qualification of this Duty.

3dly, Confession must proceed from a *lowly Heart*, in token of our Self-abasement. This, if taken distinct from the former, must signify the lowly Gestures and Behaviour of the Body, by kneeling, bowing, prostrating, and the like; and gives us to understand that the Humility of the Body is to attend that of the Mind, in our Addresses unto God: and therefore our Church commands us to be upon our knees in all our Confessions to him. And therein she follows the steps of devout Men in all Ages, who have always express'd the inward Humility of the Soul, by the outward lowly Postures and Prostrations of the Body, and never approach'd the Divine Majesty without a lowly Sense of their Unworthiness, and the most profound Humility. *Abraham* debas'd himself even to *Dust and Ashes*; *Job* cloth'd himself with *Sack-cloth*; and *David* frequently call'd upon himself and others to *fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker*. And indeed, what can be more fit, than that we should cast our selves down in the lowest postures of Humility, when we spread our manifold Sins and Failings before God? And nothing can better become us, than to come with submits and bended Knees, when we beg for Mercy and Pardon of them.

4thly, Confession of Sin must be made *with a penitent Heart*; that is, with a Heart fill'd with Sorrow, Shame, and Remorse for it: else we shall soon relapse and turn again to Folly. Shame and Sorrow best become such whose Actions have been base and unworthy: and such we must acknowledg ours to be, when we come to confess them. That ours are so, we need not be shy of owning, when we consider the Majesty we have offended, the Laws we have broken, the Grace we have rejected, and the Patience we have abus'd. *O my God, I am asham'd and blush to lift up my face unto thee, saith Ezra, chap. 9. 6. for our Iniquities are increas'd over our heads, and our Trespases are gone up to Heaven*. All Sin hath that deformity and defilement in it, that we may well blush and be confounded at the sight of it; and he must have a brazen Forehead, that can see or speak of them without shame and blushing. And therefore 'tis promis'd as a Blessing to God's People, that *they shall remember their ways, and be asham'd, Ezek. 16. 61.*

But



But this outward Shame, of it self is not sufficient, without an inward Sorrow and Remorse for it: A mere verbal Acknowledgment of Sin, tho attended with blushing, is not always the Confession of a true penitent Heart; for some Men may be as little affected with Grief in the confessing, as they were in the committing of it. To qualify it aright, it must be accompany'd with a godly Sorrow and Compunction of Spirit: St. Peter's Converts were *pricked at the heart*, upon the confessing of their Sins, and said one to another, *What shall we do?* Acts 2. 37. The same Contrition of Spirit are we to feel in our humble Acknowledgments to Almighty God: every Sin we confess, should be like a Dagger piercing the Heart, and every Transgression like a Dart wounding the Soul with Compunction and Sorrow for it; and that must be follow'd with a perfect Hatred and Detestation of it. Which leads to the

Last Qualification here mention'd, which is to confess *with an obedient Heart*; that is, with a Heart so possess'd with a Dislike and Abhorrence of Sin, as to amend what is past, and to forsake it for the future: resolving with our selves, if we can get a pardon for what we have hitherto done amiss, to do so no more. 'Tis this alone can make our Sorrow for Sin a godly Sorrow, and our Repentance such as need not to be repented of. To which end, the Wise-man here joins confessing and forsaking of Sin together; the one being of no avail without the other. And this forsaking of Sin must be not only from the outward practice of it, from which worldly Shame and Interest may sometimes restrain us; but from all inward love and liking to it: both these the Prophet *Isaiah* expresses by *the wicked Man's forsaking his way, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts*, Isa. 57. the one relating to the outward Actions, the other to the inward Motions and Affections of the Soul. Neither is this forsaking of Sin, from one or more only, but from all, even the most beloved Vices, and *the Sin that doth so easily beset us*. And all this to be observ'd with Constancy and Perseverance to the end.

These are the Qualifications of true Confession, which you see is to be attended with the Sincerity and Humility of the Mind, the Lowliness and Submissiveness of the Body, with the Sorrow and Penitence of the Heart, and with the thorow Obedience and Amendment of Life. From whence I proceed,

II. To the End and Encouragement to Confession, the next thing to be consider'd, both in the Exhortation and the Text: *To the end that we may obtain Forgiveness of the same, by his infinite Goodness and Mercy, saith the Exhortation; And whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have Mercy, saith our Text:* Both which instruct us in these two Lessons.

1. That confessing and forsaking of Sin, is the best means of obtaining the Forgiveness of it. And,

2. That the manner of obtaining it, is not by way of Merit, but purely of Mercy. For the

1. We are taught here, that a penitent Confession of Sin, is the best means of obtaining the Forgiveness of it; for God hath made this the condition of his granting of it. He that hath the sole power of giving Pardons, may put what Terms he thinks fit upon his dispensing of them: And since God hath appointed this as the condition of his bestowing it, 'tis our Wisdom to have recourse to it, as the best means of obtaining it. And indeed what more easy and reasonable Terms could be desir'd, than to have our Sins pardon'd, upon our coming and confessing of them? Is it not fit to renounce the Faults we would have remitted? Who is there but requires this in the ordinary Trespases committed against himself? And can we reasonably expect that God should forgive our manifold and heinous Offences upon easier Terms, than we are wont to pass by the slightest Injuries?

Thus we see the End of Confession is Forgiveness, but not so as to exclude the Glory of God, the great End of all things; for as we are principally to aim at that in every thing we do, so ought it to be our chief End in confessing our Sins: and therefore *Achan* was bid to give Glory to God, by confessing his Fault, as we before shew'd. And indeed this is a very proper way of glorifying God; for hereby we debase our selves, by acknowledging our own Vileness and Unworthiness; and magnify God, by adoring his infinite Purity and Perfection: for by confessing to him, we own his Power to forgive, we trust to his Goodness, and demonstrate our Belief in him, as a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and ready to pardon, with other of his transcendent Excellencies; which is the best way we have of setting forth his Praise and Glory.

Neither



Neither are these two Ends of God's Glory, and our own Forgiveness, any way inconsistent, but mutually assistant and dependent upon one another; for God hath twisted them, and brought both these two Ends together: for when we glorify God, we promote our own Good, and advance our own Glory; and they understand not what the Glory of God means, who would separate it from his doing good, and shewing kindness to his Creatures.

And as Forgiveness is the End of Confession; so is Confession the Means of attaining Forgiveness; and that so sure and certain, that we cannot fail of the end, if we duly observe and follow the means. Of this we have the highest and greatest Security that was possible for God to give, or we to have; for he hath given us not his bare Word only, but his Oath also, to confirm the certainty of his Promise, and the immutability of his Counsel, *Heb. 6. 18.* And if we confess our Sins (saith St. John) he is faithful and just to forgive them. So David found by happy Experience, for his Sins were cover'd, by his acknowledging, and not hiding them: Yea, he did but speak or resolve upon confessing of them, and they were immediately done away; *I said, I will confess my Transgressions unto the Lord (saith he) and thou forgavest the Iniquity of my Sin, Psal. 32. 5.* And the Prophet Isaiah assures us, *That if the unrighteous Man forsake his ways, and turn unto God by Confession and Repentance, he will have mercy upon him, and will abundantly pardon him, Isa. 55. 7.* And this will lead me to the

Last thing to be spoken to, and that is, the Manner of God's bestowing, and our obtaining Forgiveness of Sin, which is not by way of Merit, but purely of Mercy. So the Exhortation of the Church ascribes it wholly to God's infinite Goodness and Mercy: And Solomon, in the Text, puts it upon the same foot, saying, *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his Sin, shall have Mercy.* That it cannot come by way of Merit, is evident, because we cannot satisfy Divine Justice for the least Sin, and so cannot of our selves claim or merit a Pardon for any: All our Hopes must be, not from our own, but from the Merits of Christ, who hath satisfy'd for us, and so may claim it as the Merit of his Purchase; and therefore our Church teaches us to sue unto Almighty God, in his Name, and for his Merits, and not in our own, who can challenge or deserve



deserve nothing. For to the notion of Merit three things are necessary :

(1.) To give something of our own. And here we are cut off from meriting, because we have nothing of our own to give; for we are not *sufficient* of our selves to think a good thought, but *all our Sufficiency is of God*, and we cannot merit by what is merely given us.

Again, (2.) To merit, we must give something that we do not owe, or are indebted for; for no Man merits by paying his Debt. And here again all Merit and Boasting is excluded: for we owe unto God all that we have, are, and much more than we can do; and when we have done our best, we can only say that we are unprofitable Servants, and have done but what was our Duty to do. Moreover,

Lastly, To merit any thing, there must be a proportion between the Work and the Wages: whereas our best Works are attended with many defects and imperfections, and bear no proportion with the Reward that is promis'd to, and we may expect from them; so that there can be no colour of Claim, nor any pretence of Merit by them. To all which we may add, that we are so far from meriting by all we can do, that we deserve rather to be punish'd than pardon'd for it. Forgiveness then is to be ascrib'd wholly to God's Mercy, and not to our Merit: we are to esteem it infinite Goodness, that such Sinners as we are should be forgiven upon any Terms, for strict Justice admits of no Repentance at all; and 'tis a high Act of Grace and Goodness, that God will accept of such easy Terms as Confession and Amendment, when he might justly exact far harder.

Thus we see the Nature of Confession, the Qualifications of it, and the great Benefits that accrue from it.

All that remains, is to persuade you to so pious, necessary and beneficial a Duty. Come then and confess your Sins unto God, and you shall find Ease and Rest unto your Souls; for nothing more opens the Heart, and lightens it too, than a free and ingenuous Confession: *Whilst I kept silence (saith the Psalmist) and hid mine Iniquities, they lay hard and heavy upon me, and press'd me sore: But when I said, I will confess my Transgressions, he presently forgave the Wickedness of my Sin.* And nothing more opens the Ears of God to hear and answer our Petitions,

Petitions, than an humble and hearty Acknowledgment of our evil ways. This is the way to obtain *Forgiveness* by his infinite Goodness and Mercy; and by thus confessing and forsaking our Sin, we shall assuredly find that Mercy, which we cannot have by our own Merits, but may safely expect from the Merits of Christ: To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd all Honour and Glory, now and for evermore. *Amen.*



## DISCOURSE XVI.

HEB. X. 25.

*Not forsaking the assembling our selves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching.*

**W**E are yet upon the *Exhortation* that goes before the *Confession*: In which I have observ'd to you,  
First, A Call to Confession of Sin.

Secondly, A Caution against cloking and dissembling of it.

Thirdly, The Qualifications of true Confession. Together,

Fourthly, With the End of Confession, viz. the Forgiveness of Sins. Of all which you may remember I have discours'd at large. I come now in the

Next place, To consider the Times and Seasons of Confession, as they are prescrib'd and directed in this *Exhortation* of the Church: And they are,

I. In general, at all times; for so we read, that we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our Sins before God.

II. More particularly and principally, at the times of meeting in the publick Assemblies; so it follows, that

that we ought most chiefly so to do, when we assemble and meet together. To which is added,

III. The End and Design of publick assembling our selves together: and they are,

1st, To render Thanks for the great Benefits we have receiv'd at God's hands.

2dly, To set forth his most worthy Praise.

3dly, To hear his most Holy Word.

4thly, To ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the Body as the Soul. Of all which, I shall discourse to you from those words of the Text; *Not forsaking the assembling your selves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, &c.* I begin then,

I. With the general time of confessing, which is *always*; for so we are here told, that we ought at all times humbly to acknowledg our Sins before God. Not that we are always to be upon our knees, actually repeating and making Confession to him; for that would interfere with other necessary Duties: but that we are to be ever willing and readily dispos'd, upon all fitting occasions and opportunities, to lay open our Offences, without ever thinking or desiring to hide or cloke any thing from the sight and knowledg of God. To this purpose are the several Precepts, for *praying always*, and *praying without ceasing*; which signify not a continual uninterrupted Performance of the Duty, but a constant Readiness and Disposition to it: For we may be said to do that always, which we are always ready and willing to do. So that to confess our Sins at all times, is to be still inclin'd and prepar'd to do it; 'tis to do it in private as well as in publick, and not to make the one an excuse for the other. Our confessing in private, will not excuse us from attending upon and joining in the publick Confession; and our attending and making a publick Confession, will not altogether excuse us from the private confessing of them: the one must not exclude the other, but both are to be observ'd in their due and proper times; by doing whereof, we may be said, at all times humbly to acknowledg our Sins before God: especially if it be daily done and observ'd by us; for we are said to do that always, which we do every day. And this is no more than what is necessary and fit to be done; for since we daily renew our Sins, it

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is but reason that we should daily renew our Confession. And because we daily commit some particular and secret Sins, which enter not the publick Confession, and which no Eye but God's ever saw, therefore are we daily to make our private Confession, to bewail and repent of them before God; the doing whereof is the performing what is here requir'd, to wit, the acknowledging our Sins at all times before him. But,

II. *This is most chiefly to be done, when we assemble and meet together.* In speaking to this I must shew,

1. The Institution and Use of such Meetings and Church-Assemblies, for the Celebration of Divine Worship.

2. The Duty and Necessity of frequenting them for that purpose.

3. The Evil and Danger of forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is. And,

Lastly, Conclude with an Exhortation to repair to and frequent them.

And, 1. Of the Institution and Use of such publick Meetings and Church-Assemblies for the Celebration of Divine Worship: And these have been as antient as Religion and Christianity it self, which hath ever had, from the beginning, some publick Places set apart, by Divine Authority, for such Assemblies. The *Jews* had the Temple and Synagogues consecrated for that purpose, where they were commanded to make their Confessions and Oblations, and other Acts of publick Worship, which were resorted to and frequented by Christ and his Apostles. After which, the Christians had their Churches and Oratories set apart for Divine Service, as we read in Holy Scripture and Ecclesiastical History, and find deriv'd down and continu'd to us to this day.

But here we must note, that 'tis the meeting in consecrated Places, by the publick Authority of the Church, and in Union with it, that makes a Church-Assembly; otherwise, except in cases of absolute necessity, 'tis a separate and schismatical Meeting: for as in the State, the meeting together of great numbers, without the allowance of publick Authority, is a Riot, not a lawful Assembly; so in the Church, the meeting together of People in private or unconsecrated Places, without or against the Authority of the Church, is a Conventicle, not a Church-Assembly

Assembly. We read that the Primitive Christians allow'd no separate Assemblies or Congregations, but what met publickly in the Church; and we find an expresse Canon in the Council of *Gangra*, that if any shall take upon him out of the Church to preach in private Houses, making light of the Church, and doing those things which belong only to the Church, without the presence of the Priest, and the leave and allowance of the Bishop, let him be accurs'd; Concil. Gang. Can. 6. So that 'tis the lawful Assemblies of the Church, which we are here requir'd not to forsake; as we shall see by and by: Whereas we are bid to *mark those that cause Divisions*, by creeping into Houses, and drawing People aside into separate and schismatical Meetings; with a Caution, not to follow, but *avoid them*; Rom. 16. 17.

Now the Use of those solemn Assemblies of the Church ever was, that the People might there meet and join together in performing the holy Offices of Religion unto the Divine Majesty. So we read, the *Jews* serv'd God in the Temple and Synagogues by Prayers, Hymns, and hearing the Law: And *St. Austin* gives the same account of the Christian Assemblies in his time; for there (he tells us) the Law of God was taught, his Miracles rehears'd, his Bounty celebrated, and his Blessings pray'd for. Accordingly our Church here mentions the same Ends of our assembling and meeting together in the publick Places of Divine Worship: As,

*1st, To render Thanks to Almighty God, for the great Benefits that we have receiv'd at his hands.* Where we acknowledge, that all that we have, even *Life and Breath, and all things*, come from God, and we receive all from his bountiful hands, for which we are to return him our most humble and hearty Thanks: and these Acknowledgments are the more solemn and the more acceptable, when they are jointly made and offer'd by the People together in the publick Assemblies of the Church. And this answers to the *Jewish* Sacrifices and Oblations, that were offer'd up in the Temple, which were that Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving they paid for all the rest. Hence we find *David*, that great Master of Thanksgivings, often asking, *What we shall render unto the Lord for all his Benefits?* And thereupon resolves to *take the Cup of Salvation, and to call upon the Name of the Lord, to pay his Vows in the Courts of the Lord's House, and to speak of his wondrous Works in the great*



*great Congregation.* Indeed, every Benefit lays upon us the Obligations of a Debt, which Gratitude and common Justice requires us to pay : and as private Blessings call for our private and particular Acknowledgments, so publick Blessings require more publick and solemn Thanksgivings ; which we are to render unto God, when we assemble and meet together : at which times, our Church here intimates, we are to confess our Ingratitude, and bewail the unworthy Returns we make for all his Mercies ; which, if jointly acknowledg'd and amended, will the more effectually prevail for a Pardon.

2dly, Another End of our assembling and meeting together, is, as we are here told, *to set forth his most worthy Praise.* This answers to the *Jewish* Hymns and Hallelujahs that were sung in the Temple and Synagogues. And this is so natural a piece of Worship, that the very Heathens were careful to perform it in their Temples, where they set forth the Honour, declar'd the Excellencies, and sounded the Praises of their Idol Gods : How much more ought we to give unto the most High God, the Honour due unto his Name ? This, we read, was the continual Exercise and Delight of the Royal Psalmist, who was ever singing the Praises of his Maker, and calling upon others to do the same : which is one great End of our publick Assemblies, where again we are to confess our great Neglects of this solemn Duty, and to bewail the great dishonour we thereby bring to his most holy Name. Again,

3dly, Another End of our assembling and meeting together, is *to hear his most holy Word.* This answers to the reading and expounding the Law among the *Jews*, which they carefully and constantly did in the Temple and Synagogues. Suitable whereunto, our Saviour commanded his Apostles to go and teach all Nations, and to expound to them the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and his Ministers are still appointed to dispense his holy Word and Sacraments, and wait continually on this very thing. This is a known End and Business of our publick Assemblies, where the Word of God is diligently and faithfully preach'd ; and by resorting to them, Men may be built up in the most holy Faith, and become wise unto Salvation. And here again we are to confess our Sins, when we assemble and meet together for this purpose ; that is, we must acknowledg our great Neglect and Contempt of God's Word, our Non-Proficiency under it, and lament our Barrenness



renness and Unfruitfulness under the most plentiful means of Grace; that we may be sorry for what is past, and amend for the future.

4thly, The last End assign'd here of our assembling and meeting together, is, *to ask those things that are requisite and necessary, as well for the Body as the Soul.* This is agreeable to the Account and Design of all publick Meetings for Religious Worship; which, among other things, were intended to implore the Divine Grace and Assistance for the Good of our Souls, and to ask temporal Blessings for the Good and Welfare of our Bodies. We of our selves are feeble and impotent Creatures, utterly unable to supply the wants of either: We cannot help our selves out of the least strait, nor preserve our selves for one moment; but depend intirely upon the Aid and Bounty of our Maker: Our Souls would languish, and our Bodies pine away, without the constant Influences of his Grace and Goodness. And therefore we are to petition for his Care and Support of both; that is, as well for Health and Strength, for Food and Rayment, for Peace and Plenty, for the Welfare of our Bodies, as for Redemption, Instruction, and Sanctification, for the Comfort of our Souls. As Children then go to their Father for what they lack, so ought we to go to our heavenly Father for the supply of all our Wants; and the more solemnly and unanimously we go together, the better we are like to speed. And here likewise we must go with a Sense and Acknowledgment of our Sins, saying with the prodigal Son, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son:* and then we may hope to find the same kind Reception that he did, to be welcom'd and made for ever happy with him.

Thus I have shew'd you the Institution, End, and Use of publick Assemblies for Religious Worship, and that such Meetings are the proper Times and Places to acknowledg and confess our manifold Sins and Wickedness before God. From whence I proceed, in the

Next place, to shew our Duty with relation to them: and that is, not to forsake, but frequent them; for so the Apostle's Advice here is, *not to forsake the assembling our selves together, as the manner of some is,* but rather diligently to repair and resort to them. And here 'twill be requisite to shew,

(1.) The great Benefit of frequenting the publick Assemblies of the Church.

(2.) The great Danger of forsaking of them : and then we shall see,

(3.) The great Folly and Wickedness of such as absent themselves from them, as the manner of too many is. And,

(1.) The Benefit of frequenting the publick Assemblies is very great, for there it is that God hath appointed to meet and to bless his People : *Where two or three are met together in my Name (saith God) there will I be in the midst of them.* God delights to be in the Assemblies of his Saints, and he welcomes those that draw nigh unto him : and sure a greater Blessing may be reasonably expected by going to God's House, than by staying at home in our own. Yea, God hath appointed the Church for the place where he imparts his Blessings ; and thither we must come, if we mean to have them. There it is that God dispenseth to us the means of Salvation, by hearing his Word, receiving the Holy Sacraments, and putting up our joint Prayers for one another. And therefore we read of the primitive Christians, that *they continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine, in Fellowship, in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer, Acts 2. 48.* And elsewhere, that *they were daily in the Temple, with one accord blessing and praising God. Faith comes by hearing (saith the Apostle) and hearing by the Word of God :* And what benefit can we receive by either, without attending upon them ? *How can they hear without a Preacher ?* And what need were there of a Preacher, if Men were not oblig'd to hear him ? In a word, 'tis by a due and diligent resorting to the Church or House of God, that we can alone attain to Grace here, and Glory hereafter. And as the Benefit is great, if we duly attend the publick Assemblies ; for then we are in the way of God's Blessing, and consequently in the right path that leads to eternal Life : so,

(2.) Is the Danger great, if we withdraw from them, and forsake the assembling our selves together ; for then we are out of the true way to both, and wander in the paths of Destruction. To leave the Church, is to apostatize from God ; which leads to Atheism, Irreligion, and every evil Work : and therefore the Apostle, to persuade Men to hold fast the Profession of Faith without wavering, to which he had exhorted in the Verse before the Text, cautions them in the Text against forsaking the publick

Assemblies; implying, that keeping to the Church is the best way to keep the Faith; and the forsaking of the one, is the ready way to desert the other. Of such Separatists and Apostates as these, St. John speaks in the first Epistle, chap. 2. 18, 19. *They went out from us, because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that it might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.* Where the Apostle proves that they were corrupt in the Faith, from their Separation or forsaking the Christian Assemblies; for otherwise they would not have separated from the Christian Church. In short, to leave the publick Congregations of the Church, is to go out of God's way, to reject the Means of Grace, and to deprive our selves of the Hopes of Glory.

(3.) Thus we see the dangerous Folly and Wickedness of forsaking the assembling ourselves together; which yet, the Apostle tells us, *is the manner of some to do.* And as 'twas the manner of some in the Apostle's days, so I fear 'tis the manner of more now; too many living in a gross and scandalous Neglect of publick Worship.

Some forbear the publick Assemblies out of mere Laziness and a supine Negligence, preferring a Chimney before a Church; which makes them unwilling to move over the threshold to hear a Sermon, and more inclin'd to join in Play, than in Prayer. Such as these pretend to have many good Books, and can pray and serve God at home, as well as in the Church: tho' 'tis to be fear'd, that a warm Bed in the morning, and a Bottle in the afternoon, serve for the most part instead of their Morning and Evening Service. However, if it be true what they say, which is much to be doubted; 'tis most certain, that publick Prayers are more pleasing and prevalent with God, than any private Devotions; for he esteems himself more honour'd, and the People are more edify'd by the one than the other: And therefore God is said to *love the Gates of Zion better than all the Dwellings of Jacob; and one Day in his Courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.*

Others forsake the publick Assemblies, out of Profaneness, for want of a due Sense of Religion, and from the Contempt of it: such as these, in Solomon's Phrase, *hate Knowledge and despise Instruction, and cast the Word of God behind their back;* for which they will dearly rue both in this World and the next.

Others



Others again forsake the solemn Assemblies of the Church, from some pretended Scruples they have taken up against the Worship and Communion of it : But these are so weak and frivolous, and have been so often refuted and discover'd to them, that the continuance in them can be only the effect of Pride, Obstinacy, and affected Ignorance ; and can afford them no reasonable Plea for their Absence and Separation from them, either before God or Men.

Thus we see both the Time and Place, when and where we are to assemble and meet together, to make our humble Confession and Acknowledgment to Almighty God our Heavenly Father ; together with the Necessity that lies upon us to resort to the publick Assemblies for that purpose.

I shall shut up this Discourse with the Advice in the close of the Text, which is, *to exhort one another, and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching* : that is, not only to frequent the solemn Service of God our selves, but to call upon and excite others by our Example and Exhortations to do the same. And the rather, because ye see the Day approaching, which some understand of the Day of the approaching Destruction of *Jerusalem* ; which was a good Argument to the *Jews* to make ready for that time, by their humble and penitent Confessions of their Sin : Others understand it of the approaching Day of Judgment, of which that was a sign and fore-runner ; and so 'tis a good Argument to all Christians, to prepare themselves by Repentance and a holy Life against that time, that they may give a good account at that last and great Day ; for which God of his infinite Mercy prepare us all, thro Jesus Christ. Amen.



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## DISCOURSE XVII.

ROM. XV. 6.

*That ye may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**H**AVING open'd and explain'd to you the several Parts of the *Exhortation*, which the Church hath order'd to be read before the *Confession*; I come now, in the last place, to

The Conclusion of it, in these words; *Wherefore I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany me with a pure Heart and humble Voice, unto the Throne of the Heavenly Grace, saying after me.* Where we may observe, 1<sup>st</sup>, That as the Minister was order'd to begin the *Exhortation* with the kind and courteous Compellation of *Dearly Beloved Brethren*, the better to engage the Attention, and insinuate into the Affections of the Hearers; so is he here directed to end it after the same manner, with praying and beseeching, the better to win and work upon them. Tho the Church hath power enough to command, yet it chuses rather to intreat, as St. Paul did to *Philemon*, saying, *Tho I might be bold in Christ, to enjoin thee what is convenient, yet for Love-sake I rather beseech thee*; *Philem. ver. 8, 9.* So he told the *Corinthians*, *2 Cor. 5. 20.* *We are Ambassadors for Christ, to pray and beseech you in Christ's stead.*

2<sup>dly</sup>, The Persons thus intreated and address'd to, are all that are present in the Congregation; *I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present.* High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another, Young and Old, Persons of all Ages, Sexes, States, and Conditions; all being Sinners, are here call'd upon to come and make confession.

3<sup>dly</sup>, The thing to which they are invited, is to *accompany the Minister to the Throne of the Heavenly Grace.* A great Privilege allow'd to the People under the Gospel, which the *Jews* had not under the Law! for then none enter'd the Temple but the Priest only, the People being

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admitted

admitted no farther than the outward Court, where they sent and offer'd their Petitions by the Priest. But now they may come more boldly to the Throne of Grace, and accompany the Minister in offering up their Prayers and Confessions with him, to which he here invites them.

4thly, We have the manner of doing this aright; and that is, *with a pure Heart*, free from all Hypocrisy, and a *humble Voice*, audible, but not too loud, so as to drown or disturb the Devotion of others; but with a lowly Heart, and a low Voice repeating the words of Confession with the Minister, and saying them after him. Of these things I shall discourse to you at this time, from these words of the Apostle, *That ye may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Where we may observe,

- I. A Duty enjoin'd; that is, to *glorify God*.
- II. The Manner of performing it; that is, *with one Mind and one Mouth*.
- III. A Motive to enforce it, from the Relation that God hath to our Saviour; *Glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

I begin with the Duty here prescrib'd, and that is, to *glorify God*; by which is meant, not our adding any thing to the transcendent Glory of the Divine Nature and Perfections, for that is not in our power: *God is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*; and admits of no new Accessions to his Glory by any thing that we can say or do. But the glorifying of God consists chiefly in these two things: in a high and honourable Esteem and Reverence for him in our Hearts, and likewise in all outward Expressions of Honour, Duty, and Reverence towards him. The one is internal Honour, whereby we are said to *glorify God with our Souls and Spirits*; the other external, whereby we are said to *glorify him with our Bodies*, or the outward Man.

(I.) I say to glorify God is to have a high and honourable Esteem of and Reverence for him in our Hearts, to entertain Thoughts worthy of him, and have Conceptions imprinted on our Minds suitable to the Eminence and Perfection of his Nature: that is, to apprehend him to be (as he really is) superlatively good, wise, powerful, holy, and just; to take him for our Maker and Preserver, and



to own our absolute and entire Dependence upon him; and to pay him our Homage and Adorations accordingly. In such internal and devout Acts of the Mind, does the glorifying of God primarily consist. But it does not altogether rest there, in mere speculative Notions of the Divine Excellencies, but produces,

(2.) Some external Acts and Expressions of Honour suitable to them: that is, such high Thoughts of his infinite Power and Greatness, as make us to dread and stand in awe of him; such Apprehensions of his Justice, as beget a fear of offending him; such an Esteem of his Wisdom, as causes us to admire him; and such a Sense of his Goodness, as puts us upon all Acts of worshipping and adoring of him. This the Psalmist stiles, *the giving unto God the Honour that is due unto his Name, and worshipping him with a Holy Worship*, Psal. 29. 2. To glorify God then, is to publish and proclaim his Honour, to set forth his Praise, and to give him the Glory of all his Attributes: *Who so offereth me Thanks and Praise* (saith he) *he honoureth me; and to him that ordereth his Conversation aright, will I shew the Salvation of God*, Psal. 50. 23. And this is done by all penitential Acts of Body or Mind, whereby we submit or humble our selves before God, or exalt and sound forth his Praises. *Achan* is said to give Glory unto God, by confessing his Sins, Josh. 7. 19. *David* daily did it, by extolling his Power and Goodness, and calling upon others to worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker. In short, to glorify God is to worship him, and to pay him all the Adorations of Body, Soul and Spirit; and the more solemn and publick this is, the greater Honour are we said to do him: and therefore *David* resolv'd to make his Praises of God as publick as he could; saying, *I will declare thy Name unto my Brethren, in the midst of the Congregation will I praise thee*, Psal. 22. 22. And likewise exhorts others, *to exalt him in the Congregation of the People, and praise him in the Assemblies of the Saints*, Psal. 107. 32. This is the glorifying of God here in the Text, and imply'd in this Exhortation of the Church, viz. the inward honouring of God in our Heart, with devout and pious Affections, together with the outward Expressions of it, by praying to and praising of him. From whence I proceed,

II. To the Manner here prescrib'd for the performing of it; and that is, *with one Mind, and one Mouth*: *That with one Mind and one Mouth ye glorify God.* Where we have both the Unanimity and the Uniformity that is to be observ'd in publick Worship. Of which particularly. And,

1st. Of the Unanimity of publick Worship, which is here requir'd to be perform'd *with one Mind*, to which we have many Precepts both in the Old and New Testament. Holy David calls upon the People, *to worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*, Psal. 29. 2. that is, with a comely Order and Harmony, which will add a grace to it, and make it look fair and amiable. And elsewhere he wills them to serve and praise the Lord *together*; which refers not so much to the Unity of Place as the Unity of Mind, that it be done with one Heart and one Consent. In the New Testament we find our Saviour making our Agreement in our Petitions necessary to the Success or good Issue of them, saying, Mat. 18. 19; 20. *If two or more shall agree on Earth, touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven: For where two or three are gather'd together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* Where 'tis the Harmony of our Prayers, or the offering them up with one Accord and one Mind, that procures Audience and Acceptance of them; And therefore the last thing that Christ pray'd for of his heavenly Father, in the behalf of his Disciples and Followers, was for this Unity of Heart and Mind: John 17. 21. *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the World may believe that thou hast sent me.* Where he begs his Father to work the Hearts of his Followers to that Harmony of Mind and Affection, that was between his Father and him, which would be the best Argument to convince them of the Truth of his Mission and Doctrine: for the World would sooner believe that God had sent him, if his Disciples agree together in what they desire or profess, than if they clash or differ in either, and pray without or against one another: For which reason St. Paul beseeches the Corinthians, *by the name of Christ, that there might be no Divisions among them in these things, but that they may be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind and in the same Judgment*, 1 Cor. 1. 10. The same Apo-

He, in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, exhorts them to *stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel*, Chap. 1. 27. And Chap. 2. 1, 2. he beseeches them by all that is dear and sacred, to be *like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord and of one Mind*. St. Peter likewise gives the same Advice, 1 *Pet.* 3. 8. *Be ye all of one Mind*; which is what our Text here calls us to, *viz.* to glorify God with one Mind; the Unanimity of publick Worship.

2ly. But some who love or live by Divisions, tell the People, that there never was nor will be a time when all Men will be of one Mind; and we may as well expect to see all Men of one Complexion and Stature as of one Mind, and that they should all have but one Calling and Profession in the World, as to have the same Judgment and Opinion in the Worship of God. All which are no better than plain Fallacies and frivolous Objections against what we are here exhorted to, namely, the glorifying of God with one Mind.

As for the (1.) That there never was a time wherein all Men were of one mind in the Service of God, it is a plain Falstiy; for *Jerusalem*, which in Scripture signifies the whole Church, is expressly said to be at *Unity within it self*; for *thither the Tribes went up, even the Tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, and to give Thanks unto the name of the Lord*: which the Psalmist declares as matter of great Joy; *I was glad (saith he) when they said unto me, We will go into the House of the Lord, our Feet shall stand in thy Gates, O Jerusalem, Psal.* 122. 1, 2, 3, 4. They unanimously resorted to the Temple, and there offer'd up their Prayers and Praises together. In the New Testament we read of the Primitive Christians, that they were *all of one heart and one mind*, Acts 4. 32. that they were continually together in the Temple, blessing and praising God, Luke 24. 53. that they met together in one place, with one accord and one mind, Acts 2. 1. that they continu'd steadfast in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, in breaking Bread and in Prayer, Acts 2. 42. that they were daily in the Temple, with one accord, breaking Bread from house to house, and eating their Meat with gladness and singleness of Heart, Acts 2. 46. All which, and many more Testimonies that might be cited, plainly shew that blessed Harmony and Concord that was found among them in matters of Religion, and the Worship of God; and that there was a time,



time, when all Men join'd together with one mind to glorify their great Creator. Besides, the many Precepts to Unity shew it to be a possible and practicable Duty; and the many sharp Rebukes and Cautions against Divisions, manifest that they are not unavoidable, for then both would be to no purpose. Again,

(2.) As to what they say, that it may be as well expected that all Men should be of the same Complexion and Stature, as to be of the same Mind and Judgment; that is a mere Fallacy: for 'tis not in our power to have what Face or Stature we please, nor is it under any Command, that we should all have the same Complexion, or be stretch'd to the same Length. But 'tis frequently and expressly requir'd, that we should be all of one Mind, and that there should be no Divisions among us.

(3.) Tho there may and must be many Callings, Trades and Professions in the World, for the exercise of Mens various Gifts and Talents, and for the supply of their different Wants and Necessities; yet the Profession or Calling of Christianity is but one and the same to all, in which they are all to unite, and go hand in hand together: So that this can be no Plea for any Dissensions in Religion, nor any Excuse for not *glorifying of God with one Mind*, or obstructing the Unanimity of publick Worship; the first thing here requir'd in the Text. The

2d is, Uniformity, imply'd in the *glorifying of God with one Mouth*; which supposes the joining in one form of words, to be pronounc'd by all together. To this the Apostle refers, in bidding the *Corinthians* to *speak all the same things*, 1 Cor. i. 10. which cannot be without some prescrib'd Forms to that end. And the same is imply'd in that Exhortation, of *holding fast the form of sound words*; which we can neither hold fast, nor keep sound long, if it be subject to daily Variations: And therefore the sacred Offices of Religion, as Prayers, Praises, Confessions, Thanksgivings and the like, have, in all Christian Churches, been set and prescrib'd, and not left to every one's private Will and Fancy to make and alter as they please. 'Twas ordain'd by the Council of *Carthage*, that the *Prayers, Prefaces and Impositions of Hands*, confirm'd by the Synod, be observ'd and us'd by all Men. Can. 106. And our *English* Canons ordain the same, that one regular and uniform way of serving God be preserv'd and perform'd by all the Members of the National Church; for which the Council of

*Milevius* gives this good Reason, *Lest thro' Ignorance or Carelessness, anything contrary to the Faith should be vented or utter'd before God, or offer'd up in the Church.* Can. 12.

And as these Offices of Religion are set and prescrib'd, so are they likewise appointed to be one and the same throughout the whole National Church. To which purpose a Reverend Father hath cited the following Canons: In the *Concil. Toletan*, 'tis ordain'd, That all Governors of Churches and their People should observe one and the same Rite and Order of Service, which they knew to be appointed in the Metropolitan See, Canon 3. And the same is ordain'd in *Concil. Braccar*. That one and the same Order of Praying and Singing be observ'd by all, and that there should not be variety of Usages by them, that are bound to the same Faith, and live in the same Dominion, Can. 19. which agrees exactly with the Divine Canon of our Text, *That we may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God.*

But our Sectaries and Dissenters, who are Enemies to Unity and Order, and prefer Discord and Confusion before them, tell us, that *Unity in the matter of Prayer is sufficient, without any such Uniformity in Words or Syllables*; not considering that Unity in the matter of Prayer never stays long, where the Unity of Forms is laid aside. This we have known by sad Experience, in the days of the Great Rebellion: when the Common Prayers of the Church were laid aside, Men fell a praying one against another; and all manner of Blasphemy, Sedition and Treason were publickly vented in their Prayers. *Sion* was turn'd into *Babel*, and all things ran into a Chaos of Confusion. Neither could we recover again sound Doctrine, or true Devotion, without returning again to the antient Uniformity of publick Prayers; by which (God be thank'd) we are enabled with one Mind and one Mouth to glorify God, *even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Which last words, setting forth the near Relation and Union between God and Christ, are added as a Motive to engage us to unite in serving and glorifying of both, and that we should always join them as near in our Prayers, as they are in nature and relation to each other. The Union between Christ and his Father, is a Pattern or Platform of the highest, noblest and strictest Union that can be, and is therefore propounded to us for our imitation, that

that we all may be one in Heart and Affection, as they are one. It was Christ's Prayer to his Father, that it might be so, that *as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, so they may be one in us.* For this reason it was, that the Apostle here puts them together, in willing us to glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus I have explain'd to you the two great Lessons of the Text, Unanimity and Uniformity: the one express'd, by glorifying of God *with one Mind*; the other, *with one Mouth*: both which are necessary to be observ'd in all our Petitions and Addresses unto God.

It remains only to persuade you to the Practice and Observation of both.

And, 1<sup>st</sup>. Let me persuade you to Unanimity in the Worship of God, which is to glorify him with one Mind. To this the Apostles, in all their Epistles, most earnestly intreat and exhort us, and by all possible Arguments discourage and deter Men from making Divisions. *Be ye all of one Mind, and let there be no Divisions among you,* was their frequent Advice in all Places where they came; and being all of one Body, they are requir'd to join in one Worship and Communion: this will render all our Service more acceptable in the sight of God and Men. Harmony, you know, is pleasing in Musick, but Discord is harsh and grating; Concord and Unanimity is no less pleasing in the Worship of God: *Behold! how good and pleasant a thing it is for Brethren to come together in Unity*; and *I was glad* (saith David) *when they said, Let us go together to the House of God.* Unity is the Beauty of Holiness, the Ornament of the Church, and the Bulwark of Religion; whereas Divisions are the Scandal and Disgrace of all. And as Unanimity is most pleasing, so it is most prevalent with God; for if *what any two shall agree to ask, shall be granted*, Mat. 18. 19. how much more shall what is ask'd by the common Vote, or joint Desire of the Church, prevail? Let us then come unanimously to the House of God; and to that let us,

2<sup>ly</sup>. Join Uniformity in our publick Prayers, which is, to glorify God *with one Mouth*. Let us then *take to our selves Words* (as the Prophet directs) and with one mouth utter our Prayers and Praises unto God. This is what the Minister calls upon all the Congregation here to do, namely, to utter their Requests with their own Tongues, and to accompany him in their Confessions, saying after him.



## 146 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON

So we find in the publick Confessions of the Christian Church, every one was requir'd to repeat the words with the Minister, and to speak out their own Acknowledgments: for all Men being guilty before God, 'tis fit they should all assent to the common Indictment drawn up against them; there being no better way to provide that Men should not dissemble their Faults before God, than by owning them with their own Mouth, and declaring their own Wretchedness: which our Church requires all its Members to do, in the following humble and penitent Confession. Of which I shall discourse to you in my next.

### DISCOURSE XVIII.

#### PSAL. XCV. 6.

*O come let us worship, and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.*

**I** Finish'd the last time the *Exhortation*, that is appointed to go before *Confession*; the next thing that follows it, is the *Confession* it self. But before I enter upon that, I shall consider the Rubrick that is prefix'd before it, and that is in these words; *A General Confession to be said of the whole Congregation, after the Minister, all kneeling.* Where we may observe these three things:

*First*, The Title given to it; 'tis call'd, *A General Confession.*

*Secondly*, The Persons concern'd to make it; and they are the *whole Congregation*, by whom it is to be said after the Minister.

*Thirdly*, The Gesture or Posture of Body to be us'd in saying it; and that is, *All kneeling.* Of all which I shall speak from these words of the Psalmist, *O come let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.* I begin,

*First*, With the Title given to this Confession, which is call'd, *A General Confession*: And so it is in a double respect,

respect, both as to the Persons that are to make it, and as to the Matter of which it consists. For the

1. This Confession is general, in respect to the Persons; for all Men are oblig'd to make it, *there is no Man liveth and sinneth not* (saith the Apostle;) and therefore there is no Man living but is bound to make Confession of his Sins. Without Confession, there can be no Pardon; and without a Pardon, there can be no acceptance of our Persons or Services: and therefore our Church fitly begins the Service with Confession of Sins, sutable to the Practice of the antient Church; so St. Basil tells us it was in his time, as we read in his 63d Epistle. Before we beg any thing of God, or offer up any Prayers and Praises to him, it is fit we should confess and beg pardon of our Sins, which else will mar the Success, and hinder all acceptance of our Prayers; for *if we regard Iniquity in our Hearts*, so as not to bewail and repent of it, *God will not hear us*, Psal. 66. 16. And this is to be done by the whole Congregation, who are all concern'd in the issue and success of the publick Devotion, and therefore are all oblig'd to join in it; which makes it a general Confession.

And so is it, (2.) in respect of the Matter of Confession, which are the general Failings and Aberrations of human Life, that are common to all Men, and so may and ought to be confess'd by all, without descending to particular Sins, of which perhaps some in the Congregation may not be guilty. These are to be the Subject of Mens private Confessions, but may not enter into the publick Confession of the Church; which ought to be so fram'd in general Terms, that all may truly make and join in it: call'd for that reason likewise, *A General Confession.*

But the main thing here to be consider'd, is the Reverence prescrib'd to be us'd in reciting the Confession, wherein the Rubrick directs all Men to be upon their Knees: And the Text calls upon them, *to worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.* Where I shall take notice of a twofold Reverence; the one inward in the Mind, the other outward in the Body.

The former consists in honouring of God with pious and devout Affections, and in bowing our Souls before him. The latter, in external and visible Expressions and Significations of this Honour, by the humble Acts and Gestures of the Body; such as praying to, and praising  
God

God with an audible Voice, with bowing and falling down to the Ground, uncovering of the Head, kneeling, with other like outward Expressions of inward Devotion. The use of which things is, not thereby to notify any thing to God Almighty, for he perfectly knows our most secret Thoughts and Affections, and needs not to be acquainted with them by putting them into words. He hears the silent Language of the Heart, as well as speaking to him with an audible Voice; he sees the bending of our Soul, and the humble submission and prostration of the Mind, and needs no signification of these things to him, by the bending or bowing of our Bodies. But because Men cannot see this without some external visible signs, nor join in the same Petitions and Praises, without words audibly pronounc'd; therefore these things are necessary, to testify our Concurrence and Agreement with one another, in the same Acts of Worship: And God Almighty expects them too, to make his Service the more solemn, venerable and unanimous.

But that which I am to speak to at present, is touching the Posture of Kneeling, in our confessing and praying unto God; a thing, either thro ignorance or inadvertence, too much omitted by many Persons, who yet are otherwise well enough affected to Divine Service: and therefore 'twill be requisite to shew them the Error of this Omission, and if possible to persuade them to amend it. To which end I shall shew,

- I. That this Posture of Kneeling at our Prayers is enjoin'd by the Authority of God's Laws, recorded in Holy Scripture.
  - II. That 'tis requir'd by the Authority of the Church, and confirm'd by the Sanction of human Laws.
  - III. That the Nature and Decency of Divine Worship requires this, or the like humble Posture in performing of it.
  - IV. I shall shew the Evil and Danger of all Irreverence in Divine Service. And,
- Lastly, Conclude with some short Application.

I. then, Let us see what Authority the Holy Scriptures afford us for this Gesture of Kneeling in our Addresses unto God: And here we find many Precepts and Precedents, that tie this as a strict Duty upon us. Our Text



is exprefs, wherein *David* calls upon all Men to worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker: yea, we find kneeling so often commanded and practis'd in the Holy Scriptures, that all Worship, both to the true and false Gods, is exprefs'd, by bowing the Knees to them. The Devotion we pay to God, is describ'd by bowing and kneeling to him; the worshipping of *Baal* is call'd, the bowing of the Knee to *Baal*; and they who refus'd to worship him, are describ'd by their not bowing the Knee to *Baal*, 1 Kings 10. 18. So that they who neglect to kneel or bow the Knees unto God, are, in the stile of Scripture, not to be reckon'd among the Worshippers of him; for the Prayers of Penitents have been ever presented in that Posture, and the Supplications of holy Men in all Ages have been made and offer'd up upon the Knees. So was *Ezra's*, chap. 9. 5. where we read, that he fell upon his Knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord, when he made Confession to him. *King Solomon*, in his Prayer made at the Dedication of the Temple, kneel'd upon his Knees before the Altar of the Lord, with his hands spread up to Heaven, as we read, 1 Kings 8. 54. and the same is affirm'd of him, in 2 Chron. 6. 13. In like manner *Daniel* is said to kneel upon his Knees three times a day, praying and giving Thanks unto the Lord, Dan. 6. 10. In the New Testament we find our blessed Saviour teaching his Disciples, not only the Matter of Prayer, which he did in that excellent Form he gave to them, but likewise by his Example teaching the Manner or Posture they were to use in it; for *St. Luke* tells us, that he kneel'd down and pray'd, Luke 22. 41. And generally all that came to him for Mercy to their Souls, or for healing the Distempers of their Bodies, fell down upon their Knees in praying to him. So did the Father of the Lunatick, Mat. 17. 14, 15. He kneel'd down, and said, Lord! have Mercy on my Son, &c. So did the Leper, Mark 1. 40. He beseech'd him, kneeling down, and saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. *St. Stephen's* Prayer for his Persecutors was upon his Knees, Acts 7. 60. and so was *St. Peter's* for the raising of *Tabitha*, Acts 9. 40. *St. Paul* told the *Ephesians*, that he bow'd the Knees for them unto the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, Eph. 3. 14. and declar'd to the *Philippians*, that at the name of *Jesus*, which is mention'd in every Prayer, every Knee should bow, Phil. 2. 10.

II. From all which Precepts and Precedents in Sacred Writ, all Christian Churches have enjoin'd the Posture of Kneeling in their publick Prayers and Confessions. In conformity to which, our Church here requires *the whole Congregation to say the Confession after the Minister, and all kneeling*. None are too good to make Confession of Sins, and none are too great to bow and bend their Knees at it; and therefore all, without exception or respect of Persons, are requir'd to do it in that humble Gesture; high and low, rich and poor, one with another. We observ'd before that *Solomon*, who was the wisest of Men, and one of the greatest of Princes, disdain'd not to kneel at his Prayers: And King *David* here calls upon himself and others to bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker. And sure if those great and pious Princes disdain'd not to be upon their Knees in paying their Devotion to Almighty God, it must be very absurd and unbecoming in inferiour Subjects to be too stiff to bend them upon such occasions; especially when the Commands both of God and Man require this from them. Moreover,

III. The Nature, Decency and Object of Divine Worship, make the Posture of kneeling, or some such humble Gesture, necessary in the performing of it. If we consider the Nature of religious Worship, which consists in a great Awe and Reverence for the Divine Majesty, we shall find this humble Gesture highly reasonable and becoming in our Approaches to him: for when we make our Prayers and Confessions to him, our Minds should be possess'd with a great sense of that infinite distance there is between God and us, and of our constant dependence on him; we should come into his Presence with great humility of Mind, with a profound admiration of his infinite Perfections, and with deep apprehensions of our own Vileness and Unworthiness. And what can better become us, than to cast our selves down in the most humble and lowly Postures in such a Presence? *God is greatly to be fear'd in the Assemblies of his Saints* (saith the Psalmist) *and to be had in reverence of all that draw nigh unto him*, Psal. 89. 7. where both the inward Reverence of the Mind, and the outward Reverence of the Body, is requir'd in all religious Service; insomuch that  
where

where there is no such Reverence, there can be no true Worship. God is to be glorify'd with our Souls and Bodies, which are both his, and were both made and united for his Service; and where either of them is wanting, there the Service becomes lame and imperfect; which will find no acceptance, God having declar'd his dislike of such *blind and lame Sacrifices*, bidding them to *offer them to their Governors, and see whether they would be pleas'd with them*: Mal. i. 8.

And as the Nature, so the Object of religious Worship requires the greatest Reverence; for 'tis directed to our Maker, from whom we receive Life, and Breath, and all things: and therefore our Text calls upon us, to *bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker*. 'Tis the highest reason, that we should worship and adore him that made us, and serve him in the lowliest manner, in whom *we live, move, and have our Being*; his infinite Goodness, as well as Greatness, justly challenges our most profound Humility. The Solemnity of our Addresses is generally measur'd by the Dignity and Greatness of the Object, to which they are directed; when we bespeak a great Person, we place our selves, and all our Words and Actions in the best order we can: and as it would be absurd to approach a Prince with that Carelessness and Freedom, that we do an ordinary Person; so it is infinitely more rude and unbecoming, to abandon a due Care and Reverence to the Divine Majesty, who is greater than all the Princes and Potentates of the Earth.

And this will lead me, in the next place, to consider,

IV. The Evil and Danger of Irreverence in God's Service. As for the Evil of it, that consists in the slight or contempt it shews to the Majesty of God. You know, to cast off all Awe or Decency of Behaviour in a great Presence, is reckon'd a great piece of rudeness and unmannerliness; and to have no regard to our Words or Gestures before them, is taken for no small affront or contempt of them. What the Gestures of Reverence and Respect are, depends much upon the Custom of the Country, or the Practice of the Place where we live; and tho they vary in some Places, yet the external signs of Honour are generally well known in all Countries. Now Sitting (you know) is with us reckon'd a Posture of Ease and Slöth, and betokens that Freedom and Familiarity,



which may well enough pass among Equals, but is never us'd as a Gesture of Reverence or Respect to Superiours. We account it a great rudeness to sit in the presence of a Great Man, and never ask or petition any thing in that Posture; or if we should, it would sooner occasion a repulse and rejection, than find any acceptance.

And can it become us to shew less Reverence to our Maker, than we do to our Fellow-Creatures? We never present a Petition to a Prince, but upon our Knees; and shall we presume to sit when we address to the King of Kings? We find God Almighty upbraiding some of the *Jews* for this Sauciness and Irreverence, letting them know, that their Governors would not take such slovenly Services at their hands, as they would obtrude upon him: and can we, my Brethren, think that Service good enough for the Majesty of Heaven, which would be an Affront to an earthly Magistrate? We read, that the devout *Jews* put off their Shoes, bow'd their Bodies, kneel'd, fell down, and lifted up their Eyes and Hands unto Heaven; which were the Acts and Gestures of Reverence in their Worship, and were accordingly carefully observ'd and practis'd by the antient Patriarchs, and other Members of the *Jewish* Church. In the Apostles Days we find uncovering the Head, bowing, standing and kneeling, to be the Postures of Reverence in their Assemblies; which were accordingly us'd by Christ and his Apostles, and the Christian Church have us'd the same ever since: but we never find or read of any sort of People, that pretended to any Religion, that allow'd of saying their Prayers sitting; nor hath it been heard of in any Age of the Christian Church, till very lately, that those Men would be allow'd to be Christians, or indeed of any Religion at all, that betray'd such slight Thoughts of God, or serv'd him with such Irreverence, as too many in our days are guilty of. And indeed this indecent and slovenly way of Worship was never known in this Kingdom till the late great Rebellion, when some bad Men, to serve some bad Ends, started a Dispute about Ceremonies; which was carry'd on with that eagerness and violence, as to banish all Order and Decency out of the Church, and to let in all manner of Rudeness, Confusion and Irreverence into God's Service: which Evils have taken such deep root in some weak Minds, that they cannot be thorowly cur'd or cast out to this day. This was the first Rise or Occasion of Mens sitting

ting at their Prayers; which, in all Ages of the Church before, were offer'd up in the humble Postures of Prostration, Standing or Kneeling.

And having set before you the Evil of this Irreverence, give me leave to add a little touching the Danger and just Punishment of it; and that is, the utter rejection both of our Persons and Services: for the Psalmist tells us, that *if we regard Iniquity in our Hearts*, of which this Irreverence is a great sign and degree, *the Lord will not hear our Prayers*, Psal. 66. 18. God himself tells us, that *they that honour him, he will honour; but they that despise him, shall be lightly esteem'd*: 1 Sam. 2. 30. Now the honouring of God is (as the Psalmist declares) *the fearing him in the Assemblies of his Saints, and shewing Reverence when we draw nigh unto him*, Psal. 89. 8. They that do so, shall be honour'd with the acceptance both of their Persons and their Prayers; but they that *despise*, or have slight thoughts of him, and shew it by the rudeness and irreverence of their Behaviour, *shall be lightly esteem'd*; that is, they shall be utterly despis'd and rejected. *A Servant honoureth his Master*, saith God in another place; that is, pays him the Reverence and Respect due to him: *If I then be your Master, where is my Honour?* saith the Lord of Hosts, to them that offer'd him the Blind and the Lame for Sacrifice; which he therefore rejected with great Indignation, as we read, *Mal. 1*. In like manner, if we render not unto God the Honour due unto his Name, and serve him not with an humble as well as holy Worship, all our Services will be but an Abomination to him; he will say to us, as he did to the *Israelites* of old, *Bring no more such vain Oblations, Incense is an Abomination to me: Your New Moons, Sabbaths and solemn Assemblies, I cannot away with, it is Iniquity; even the solemn Meeting, your appointed Feasts, my Soul hateth, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them*.

Wherefore, in the last place, let us hearken to this Call of the Royal Psalmist, to *come, and worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker*. Let us take care, first and chiefly, of the inward Reverence and Humility of the Mind, and serve our Maker with holy and devout Affections; and withal, let us not forget the outward bodily Reverence, that his Greatness may justly challenge from us. Let us possess our Hearts with a religious

ligious Awe and Dread of the Divine Majesty, and that will draw after it a Reverence and Decency of Behaviour from the outward Man ; for there is such a Sympathy between the Soul and the Body, that they powerfully affect each other : and the Soul hath so far the Government of the outward Man, that where the Mind is truly and thorowly affected with the Fear of God, there it will discover it self in its Words, Looks and Gestures. Remember then, that religious Worship is the Homage we owe to our Maker, and the Acknowledgment we pay him for our Being and all his Blessings, which ought in reason to be done in all the lowly and becoming ways of Adoration. There is nothing we do in this World, comparable to the publick Acts and Exercises of Religion ; and therefore nothing deserves or requires a greater Solemnity. For which reason our Church commands us, in all our Prayers and Confessions, to be upon our Knees ; for which we have the example of our Saviour, and of all good Men in all Ages, who have always perform'd their publick Devotion in these humble and lowly Gestures. Let us imitate them in saying our Prayers here, that we may join with them in singing Praises for ever hereafter : Which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



## DISCOURSE XIX.

I PET. II. 25. former part.

*Ye were as Sheep going astray.*

**H**AVING spoken of the humble Posture of Kneeling requir'd in making Confession, I proceed now to the *Confession* it self, which consists of two Parts: the one, the Confession of Sin ; the other, Petition for Mercy and Pardon. Of the first I shall treat at this time ; wherein we may observe,

- I. The Person to whom Confession is made, and that is God, describ'd here by the Titles or Attributes of *Almighty and most merciful Father.*

II. The



II. The Sins that are here confess'd; and they are,

*First*, The general Aberrations and Failings of human Life, in these words, *We have erred and strayed from thy Ways like lost Sheep.*

*Secondly*, The particular Strayings, by the original Corruption of our Nature; in these words, *We have follow'd too much the Devices and Desires of our own Hearts.*

*Thirdly*, Our Straying by actual Transgressions, *We have offended against thy Holy Laws*: And that both by Sins of Omission, *We have left undone those things which we ought to have done*; and by Sins of Commission, *We have done those things which we ought not to have done.* And,

*Lastly*, The Evil and Misery ensuing hereupon, in these words, *And there is no Health in us.* Of each of these briefly. And,

I. Of the Person to whom this Confession is made, and that is, to God, call'd here, *Almighty and most merciful Father*; where we have two or three Titles or Attributes of God, proper to usher in the following Confession. The First is taken from his infinite Power, imply'd in the word *Almighty*; which signifies him to have all Might or Power both of punishing and pardoning of us. And this is a fit Attribute to move us to Frequency and Sincerity in confessing to him, who hath all Power and Dominion over us, and can either make us eternally happy, by taking us into his Favour; or everlastingly miserable, by letting loose his Anger upon us. The Second is taken from his infinite Goodness, imply'd in the Title of *most merciful*; which signifies him to be more inclin'd to pardon than punish, that he is slow to anger, and ready to forgive. To which is added the name and relation of *Father*; to signify, that as a Father pitieth a Son whom he loveth, so hath he bowels of Pity and Compassion to all his Children: which may excite in us a hope and confidence of finding Mercy in all our Addresses and Confessions to him. And here we may observe, once for all, the Wisdom and Piety of our Church, in selecting such Titles and Attributes of God in the beginning of all her Prayers, as are most proper for the Petitions that follow them, and most likely to produce Affections suitable to them; and such are the Titles of *Almighty and*

*most merciful Father*, here prefix'd before the Confession.

From the Person to whom we confess, I proceed,

II. To the Matter of Confession, or what it is that we confess; and that is, *Our manifold Sins and Wickedness*. As,

*First*, The general Aberrations and Failings of human Life, in these words, *We have erred and strayed from thy Ways like lost Sheep*. This Branch of the Confession is taken from the words of St. Peter, mention'd in our Text, *Ye were as Sheep going astray*: which may be understood either of the first general defection or departure of Mankind from God by the first Transgression, whereby we all stray'd from the Path of God's Commandment, and became all lost Sheep; or of the daily Errings and Strayings from God's Laws, that we are guilty of, both in Thought, Word and Deed: both which are here fitly confess'd and bewail'd before God. The truth is, God's Commandments are the way that leads to everlasting Life, and his Word is the Rule given us to walk by, that we may attain unto it: While we keep to these, we are in the way that we should go, and are moving on in the Path of Life, to which it will surely bring us; but when we start aside, by breaking his Laws, and transgressing this Rule, we leave God's way that leads to Life, and are *erring and straying* in the ways of Sin and Destruction.

Some there are that distinguish between the words, Erring and Straying; making Erring relate to Sins of Ignorance, Infirmary and daily Incurſion, which are but lightly observ'd and hardly prevented: such as vain Thoughts, idle Words, or hasty Actions, and the like; by which we too often step aside, and lose our way. But Straying, they say, relates to greater Enormities, whereby Men continue longer, and wander farther out of the way, thereby contracting bad Habits and evil Customs, by which they become harden'd in their sinful Courses; such are Malice, Envy, Pride, Lust, Intemperance and the like, which are more gross Violations of God's Laws, more wilful forsakings of his way, and straying in the destructive Paths of Sin and Wickedness. Both these our Church here directs us to confess unto God, *viz.* that we have erred by lesser, and strayed by greater Provocations.

Now



Now these Errings and Strayings are here, according to the Language of Scripture, compar'd to those of Sheep, and lost Sheep. The Prophet *Isaias* acknowledges, that *all we like Sheep have gone astray, we have turn'd every one to his own way*, Isa. 53. 6. And *David* saith of himself, *I have gone astray like a lost Sheep, O seek thy Servant*; Psal. 119. 176.

The Sheep, we know, is too apt to wander and go astray; and when it does so, 'tis often lost and expos'd to great Dangers, from which it seldom returns without the Call and Aid of the Shepherd: even so we too frequently leave the good Shepherd, and wander in bye and forbidden Paths; and when we do so, we are as so many lost Sheep, intangled in the Thorns of worldly Cares and Troubles, insnar'd by the Wiles of Satan, and misled by a corrupt and deceitful Heart. There are too many who refuse to hear the Voice of the Shepherd, and follow Wolves in Sheep's-clothing, by which they are too often led and lost in the ways of Destruction; and if the good Shepherd that came to *seek and to save them that are lost*, do not cause them to turn, to *hear his Voice, and follow him*, they must perish everlastingly: for as the straying Sheep are unable and unwilling to return of themselves, so should we wander and be lost for ever, if the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls do not find and bring us back to the Fold. This is what our Church here calls us to confess and lament before God; and because our Errings and Strayings are numerous and daily (for *who can understand his Errors?* saith *David*; and *who can tell how oft he offendeth?* saith the Apostle) therefore we are directed to be every day upon our Knees, and to own with Grief to our Maker, *that we have erred and strayed from his ways like lost Sheep*; the first Branch of our publick Confession. The

Second is, A particular Acknowledgment of the bad Effects of our Original Sin, in those words, *We have follow'd too much the Devices and Desires of our own Heart*; which is one way of going astray from God's ways like lost Sheep.

Now by the *Devices and Desires of our own Heart*, we understand the original Corruption and Depravation of our Nature; which renders us too prone to Evil, and averse from that which is good. And therefore what we call Original Sin, the Jews were wont to express by the evil De-



vices and Desires of the Heart; for so the universal Corruption and *Wickedness of Man upon earth* is describ'd, *Gen. 6. 5.* that every *Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart, was only evil continually.* While Man retain'd his Innocence and Integrity, his Understanding was clear to discern Good, his Will was ready to chuse it, and his Affections bent upon the embracing and delighting in it: But since his Fall and Degeneracy, the Mind is often devising Evil, the Will desiring it, and the Affections set upon the effecting and executing of it. *Solomon* tells us, that *there are many Devices in Man's Heart,* *Prov. 19. 21.* and *Chap. 16. 9.* that *a Man's Heart deviseth his way.* Where by Devices we are to understand not the innocent Thoughts and Cogitations of the Mind, but the evil Designs and Imaginations of the Heart. And these Devices are sometimes more publick against the Government both in Church and State, and sometimes more private against particular Persons, studying mischief and devising evil against them; as how to undermine or over-reach them in their Affairs, how to wreak their Malice, Spleen, and Revenge upon them, and the like; of which we find holy *Job* complaining in his days: *I know (saith he) your Thoughts, and the evil Devices that ye wrongfully imagine against me;* *Job 21. 27.* And when the Heart hath thus conceiv'd and devis'd Evil, then the Desires run out after it, and their Endeavours pursue it, till they have brought forth the intended Iniquity. This Progress of Evil is remark'd by our Saviour, *Mat. 15. 19.* *Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Thefts, False Witnesses, Blasphemies.* And by *St. James, chap. 1. 14, 15.* *A Man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own Lust and entic'd; and when Lust hath conceiv'd, it bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, when it is finish'd, bringeth forth Death.* Now this is what our Church here teaches us to confess and bewail, in saying, *We have follow'd too much the Devices and Desires of our own Hearts:* meaning, that we have hearken'd too much to the Sollicitations of a corrupt Heart; that we have suffer'd our Minds to be led into Errors and wrong Notions of things, and then have follow'd too much the Dictates and Desires of a blind and misguided Conscience: the second thing here confess'd, which therefore is by all means to be corrected and amended.

The Third is, our erring and straying by actual Transgressions, in these words, *We have offended against thy holy Laws.* God's

God's Laws are the Director of our Lives, and the Rule of our Actions: the Law of Nature and Reason imprinted on our Minds, guides us in all moral Duties; and where that is defective, or comes short of sufficient Light to direct us, there he hath given us his *Word*, to be a *Light unto our feet*; and a *Lantern* to our paths. And by both we are taught the way to Peace and Tranquillity here, and to Heaven and Happiness hereafter.

Now as 'tis our Duty and Wisdom to observe these Laws, which are attended with a great Reward; so is it our Sin and Folly to transgress them, which will be follow'd with dreadful and insufferable Punishment.

The Apostle tells us, that *Sin is the Transgression of the Law*, and that the Wages of Sin is Death; being a Violation of the Authority of our Maker, and a Contempt of his righteous Laws.

Now this is what our Church here teaches us to confess, in saying, *We have offended against God's holy Laws*: that is, we have broken his Commandments, and violated the Laws that he hath given us to walk by; whereby we have affronted God, and done what in us lies to ruin and undo our selves. And this is the more heinous and deplorable, because the Laws against which we have offended, are not the Laws of any earthly King, or mortal Prince, which yet many times carry a very strong and indispensable Obligation with them; but the Laws of God, who is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, who hath all Power in Heaven and Earth, and to whom all things in both are bound to bow and obey. But that which enhances the Guilt of our offending against these Laws, is,

(1.) The Excellency and Perfection of them: *The Law of the Lord is perfect* (saith David) *converting the Soul*; *the Testimony of the Lord is sure, giving Wisdom to the Simple*. *The Commandments of the Lord are pure, and rejoice the Heart*, and his Judgments are true, and give light unto the eyes, Psal. 19. And to offend against such Laws, is to shut our eyes against the Light; yea, to love Darkness rather than Light, because our Deeds are evil.

Again, (2.) The Justice and Equity of God's Laws must aggravate the Guilt of breaking them: *The Statutes of the Lord are right, and open the eyes*; his Judgments are true and righteous altogether: and it must be inexcusable, to violate such righteous Precepts.

(3.) The

(3.) The Goodness of God's Laws, which are design'd wholly for our Good and Happiness, render it base and unworthy to offend against them.

Lastly, We own here the Holiness of God's Laws, and consequently our own Unholiness in transgressing of them. To offend against the Laws of our Country, which have many Defects and Imperfections, is many times highly criminal; but how vastly worse is it, to offend against the most holy Laws of God? Laws that tend to purify and perfect our Nature, and advance it to the highest state of Holiness. In a word, his *Laws are holy, just, and good*; and therefore we have great reason to confess with shame and sorrow our manifold Breaches and Violations of them. And that both

By Sins of Omission and Commission, both which are in the following words confess'd and bewail'd. The Sins of Omission are express'd in these words, *We have left undone those things which we ought to have done*; the Sins of Commission in these, *And we have done those things which we ought not to have done*. The Laws of God command some things to be done, and others to be left undone; the former are Duties requir'd of us, the latter are Sins forbidden to us. We sin against the one, by omitting or neglecting our Duty; and against the other, by committing the contrary Evil: which will comprize all our Transgressions.

As, 1<sup>st</sup>, When we leave undone those things which we ought to do, we offend against God's Laws by Sins of Omission. The Divine Laws lay many things as Duties upon us, which we are oblig'd to observe and do; and that with relation to God, our Neighbour, and our selves. As to God, we are commanded to worship him, by praying to him, by hearing his Word, and receiving the holy Sacrament, and the like. To Men we owe the good Offices of Justice and Charity: To our selves, the Duties of Temperance, Sobriety, Contentedness, and the like. Now when we cast off the practice of all or any of these things, as when we neglect the Worship of God, or turn our backs upon his Word and Sacraments; when we omit the Duties we are to pay our Neighbour or our selves, then do we *leave undone those things which we ought to have done*, and so offend against God's holy Laws by Sins of Omission. Again,

2<sup>dly</sup>, When



2dly, When we do what we ought not to do, then do we offend by Sins of Commission. The Laws of God forbid some things, as well as command others; yea, the same Law that commands one thing, does always forbid the contrary to it. As the Law that requires us to worship God, forbids Atheism, Apostacy, Blasphemy, with all other Acts of Irreligion and Profaneness: The Laws that require Honesty, Truth, and Fidelity in all our Dealings, forbid all Dishonesty, Lying, Cheating, with all manner of Falshood and Oppression: The Law that commands us to be sober and temperate in all things, condemns Drunkenness, Luxury, and all kinds of Excess. Now the not doing the Duty requir'd, is the Sin of Omission; and the doing the thing forbidden, is a Sin of Commission: and by both we offend against God's holy Laws.

And this is what the best of us have reason to confess and lament before God; for there is none but daily omits many things that he ought to do, and commits many things which he ought to leave undone: so true is that of the Apostle, that *in many things we offend all*. Who can say, *his Heart is clean* from vain Thoughts, his Mouth is clean from idle Words, or his Hands are clean from foul Actions? *The Righteous falleth seven times a day* (saith the Wise-man) and 'tis well if our Failings amount to no more. In short, if we consider the many and great Neglects of Duty the best are guilty of, their Omission of Prayers, of hearing God's Word, and receiving the holy Sacraments; together with the evil practices of Fraud, Intemperance, Envy, Malice, Slandering, and Backbiting, and the like, which are but too rise and common among Men; we shall easily see what reason we all have, to make and join daily in this Confession, That we have left undone what we should do, and have all done what we should not. And because all these will come into the Account of the last Day, 'twill be our wisdom to lessen them as much as we can by a daily Confession, and to strike off what we may from the Score by Repentance and Amendment; otherwise the Account will lie heavy upon us, and sink us into utter Destruction: And this will bring me to the last thing propounded,

To wit, the Evil and Misery ensuing hereupon, in these words, *And there is no Health in us*. Where by *Health* we understand not so much the Health of the Body, which is a great part of the Happiness of this Life, and is much

impair'd

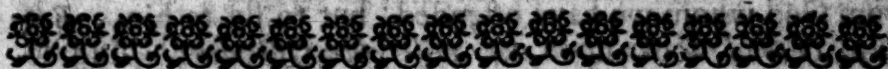
impair'd by many of the foregoing Vices; as the Health and Soundness of the Mind, or the Safety and Salvation of the Soul, which we here acknowledg to be not only endanger'd, but wholly lost by them. 'Tis frequent in Scripture to set forth the Corruption and Unsoundness of the Mind by the Maladies and Distempers of the Body, and to express the Weakness and want of spiritual Strength in the one, by the natural Defects and Decays of the other. Hence we find *David*, in confessing of his Sins, often saying, that *there was no Health in him*, nor any sound part in his Body, by reason of his Sin. And the Prophet *Isaiah*, in bewailing the publick Iniquities, expresses himself in like manner, saying, *The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart faint; from the Crown of the Head to the Sole of the Foot, there is no Soundness in it, but Wounds and Bruises, and putrifying Sores*; Isa. i. 5, 6. meaning, that the People from the highest to the lowest were all corrupt and become abominable, having no sound part left in them: The Plague of Sin, the Fever of Lust, the Consumption of Envy, the Swellings of Pride, the Venom of Malice, and the Gangrene of Error, were all broke out upon them, inso-much that there was no health or help in them. And by these Examples our Church, in enumerating our manifold Transgressions, expresses it self in the same words, saying, *There is no health in us*: to let us know, that after so many Provocations there is no Salvation, nor any Means of Help in our selves, but must look for it somewhere else; and where that is, God himself hath told us, *Hosea* 13. 9. *O Israel, thou hast destroy'd thy self, but in me is thine help*. Thither then must we have recourse, and there it is that our Church directs us, as we shall see afterwards.

Thus I have given you the Sense and Substance of the first part of our daily *Confession*, wherein we acknowledg our Errings and Strayings from God's ways, by our original and actual Transgressions, by our general and particular Vices, and by our Sins both of Omission and Commission; together with the forlorn and helpless Condition, which they have all reduc'd us to.

The second Part of it contains Petitions for Mercy and Pardon for past Offences, and likewise for Grace to prevent them for the future; which must be the Subject of our next Discourse.

In

In the mean time, I must exhort you to make this humble and hearty Acknowledgment of Sin, which the Church hath piously prepar'd for and prescrib'd to us; knowing that if we join not in the publick *Confession*, we can have no part in the *Absolution*: But if we duly and diligently confess our Sins unto God, he is ever just and ready to forgive them; which God grant, for the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



## DISCOURSE XX.

### PSALM LI. I.

*Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great Goodness; according to the multitude of thy Mercies, do away mine Offences.*

**I** Am explaining to you the publick *Confession*, to be said after the Minister by the whole Congregation: which I observ'd to consist of two Parts; in the first whereof we have,

1<sup>st</sup>, The Person to whom Confession is made; and that is, to God, *our Almighty and most merciful Father.*

2<sup>dly</sup>, The Sins that we confess unto him; and they are,

(1.) The general *Strayings* and *Wandrings* of our whole Life.

(2.) The more particular *following the Devices* and *Desires* of our own *Hearts.*

(3.) Our *offending against God's holy Laws*, by omitting what they command, and committing what they forbid.

And lastly, The miserable and helpless Condition that these things have brought us to, in those words, *There is no health in us.*

I proceed now to the Second Part of this *Confession*, which consists of *Petitions* for Pardon of what is past, and for Grace to be preserv'd from them for the future, in the following words: *But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable Offenders. Spare thou them, &c.* Of which I shall



shall discourse to you at this time, from these words of the Psalmist in his penitential Psalm; *Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great Goodness; according to the multitude of thy Mercies, do away mine Offences.* Where I shall,

*First*, Observe to you, that in all our Woes and Distresses our recourse must be wholly unto God. So our Church here directs us: for having enumerated our manifold Sins and Transgressions, together with the sad and wretched Estate we are thereby reduc'd to, it wills us not to fly from God whom we have offended, but to fly to him; *But thou, O God, look upon us, miserable Offenders.* And so did David here in the Text: He was at this time in very great distress, he felt nothing but horreur within him for what he had done, and was more than ordinarily troubled and perplex'd with himself, what would become of him. Now in this grievous strait, what course does he take? or whither does he betake himself? Why, to none but God, as we see throughout this whole Psalm; to whom he addresses to this purpose: "Lord, whither should I go, but unto thee? To whom should I turn mine eyes, or look for any Relief, but from thee, that dwellest in the Heavens? In vain is it to hope for any succour upon Earth, or to put any trust in Man, in whom there is no help: Mine Eyes look up to the Heavens, from whence cometh my Salvation, and all my Hope and Confidence is in thee." To this purpose we find him speaking almost in every Psalm. And indeed this is the best and safest course that we can take; for there we may be sure of help, which can be found no where else: all others, like Job's Friends, will prove but miserable Comforters, that rather increase than ease the Burden of our Sorrows. To trust to any worldly Succour, is to lean upon a broken Reed, which will rather wound than support; and therefore God Almighty directs us to come to him: *Call upon me (saith he) in the time of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise me;* Psal. 50. 15. Yea, he tells us, if we have but an Inclination to do so, *before we call he will answer, and while we are speaking he will hear;* Isa. 65. 24. David found the truth of this by happy experience; for he did but say, *I will confess my Sins unto the Lord, and he immediately forgave the Wickedness of his Sin;* Psal. 32. 6. And therefore we find God Almighty blaming his own People, for leaving him the Fountain of living Waters, and hewing out to them.

*themselves broken Cisterns that could hold no water; Jer. 2. 13.* Our Blessed Saviour calls all that are weary and heavy-laden with a Sense of their Sins, to come to him, and he will give ease and rest to their Souls; *Mat. 11. 29.* And when Christ, upon some Mens forsaking him, ask'd his Disciples, *Will ye also go away?* they reply'd, *Lord, whither shall we go? thou only hast the Words of Eternal Life.* So that God being the best Refuge or Tower of Defence to which we can resort in time of trouble, our Church in its Confession of Sin wisely directs us thither, when we labour under the Burden of it.

But what are we sent to him for? Why, that our Church and Text tell us, is for Mercy and Pardon: *But thou, O Lord have mercy upon us miserable Offenders,* saith our Church; and, *Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great Goodness,* saith our Text. Mercy then is what we are here advis'd to crave, being that which we all need, and which alone can help us in our forlorn Condition; and the only Motive we have to ask it, is our own Misery, which is the best Plea or Advocate we can have for Mercy: *Have mercy upon us miserable Offenders.* We may not, yea, we cannot plead any Merits of our own, for we have none to plead; our best Performances deserve rather Punishment than Pardon, and all that we can fly to or rely upon, is Pity and Compassion.

To this we have abundant Encouragement to have recourse, from the Ability and Readiness of God Almighty to shew mercy. For his Ability, the Apostle tells us, he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. For his Readiness to it, we are told that Mercy pleases him, that he is delighted with it above all Sacrifices, and that his Mercy triumphs over his Justice. Both these Motives are mention'd here in this Psalm and Exhortation: *David* in the Text asks Mercy of God, *after his great Goodness, and according to the multitude of his Mercies;* in the Exhortation we are directed to ask the same, *according to his Promises declar'd to Mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord.* The former respects the Nature of God, which is gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in Goodness and Truth: The latter his Will, which he hath declar'd to be slow to punish, and ready to pardon; which are great Inducements to go to him for Mercy and Favour. The Psalmist urges God with his former Loving-kindnesses, *which have been ever of old;* and desires to be dealt with  
according

*according to the multitude of his Mercies:* Our Church reminds him of his Promises made to us in Christ Jesus, and desires him to look upon us, as he declar'd himself in and through him; both which are prevailing Arguments to move his Compassion. For we cannot please him better, than by urging him with his own Titles and Promises; since thereby we ask no more, than what is agreeable both to his Nature and Will. Come then, we all must, unto God for Mercy.

But what is the particular Mercy we are here directed to come for? Why, that our Text tells us, is to do away our Offences: *Have mercy upon me, O God, (saith David) after thy great Goodness; and according to the multitude of thy Mercies, do away mine Offences.* And the same is imply'd in the Character the Church gives us, *Have mercy upon us miserable Offenders*; signifying, that our Misery proceeds from our Offences, and the greatest Mercy that can be shew'd to us, consists in the doing them away.

Now the doing away of our Offences, implies the removing the Punishment, the Pollution, and the Power of them; for which reason our Church hath here subjoin'd three Petitions to the *Confession*, for the doing away each of them.

The first of them is, *Spare thou them, O God, that confess their Faults.* This relates to the removing the Punishment due to our Offences, wherein we desire God not to inflict the Penalty they deserve, but to exercise his Mercy and Pity in sparing us from condign Punishment. God is in his own nature gracious and merciful, and willing to spare us; but Sin is still calling upon his Justice, and even compels him to take vengeance: *Cain's Sin* cry'd to Heaven for it; and indeed all Sin hath a voice that calls for the Rod, and makes us feel the smart of it. And the way to avert the Stroke and the Smart, is not by hiding or excusing, but by confessing our Faults: The Church's Petition extends no farther, nor is offer'd up for any other; 'tis, *Spare thou them, O God, that confess their Faults.* There is nothing to be gotten from God by pleading not guilty, or standing upon our Innocence; that rather aggravates the Fault, and increases the Punishment: for such must be beaten with many stripes, to bring them to a Sense and Acknowledgment of their Sin; and one End of God's temporal Judgments, is to force Sinners to a Confession. But our way to be spar'd, is to confess our Faults,  
and



and not to stay till the Lash or the Rack extort it from us ; but to go freely, and ingenuously acknowledg our Offences. So we find *David* did : *For thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine Iniquity, for it is great.* He did not hope to be spared by lessening his Sins, he knew that was the way to have them set in order before him, and to draw down the just Demerit of them ; but he enhances his Guilt to lessen the Punishment, and by that means obtain'd a Pardon. So that this Petition is a Deprecation of the just Punishment of our Sins, or an Appeal from the Justice to the Mercy of God, whereby we beseech him not to deal in Rigour and Severity with us, nor suffer his whole Displeasure to arise, but in the midst of Judgment to remember Mercy, to abate the Heat of his Anger, and for Christ's sake to avert the Stroke of his Vengeance from us. And the Condition upon which we ask it, is the Confession of Sin : For 'tis not, Spare all Men indefinitely as miserable Offenders, but *Spare thou them, O God, that confess their Faults.* So that without Confession there are no hopes to be spared, but with it there is a sure Promise of finding mercy.

2dly, The next Petition added to Confession, is, *Restore thou them that are penitent.* This relates to the Pollution of Sin, as the former did to the Punishment of it ; and as we pray'd to be spar'd from the one, so we here request to be restor'd from the other. All Sin hath a Stain as well as a Guilt, for it at once defiles and destroys the Soul ; and therefore we are taught to pray here to be purg'd as well as pardon'd, to be cleans'd from all Iniquity, and in some measure to be restor'd to the primitive Purity and Perfection of our Nature. Hence we find *David* praying in the next Verse to our Text, *Wash me thorowly from my Wickedness, and cleanse me from my Sin :* And ver. 7. *Purge me with Hyssop, that I may be clean ; wash me, that I may be whiter than Snow.*

Again, Restoring may refer to the Decays and Ruins that Sin brings upon the Soul, by impairing its Strength, weakening its Graces, and enfeebling all its Faculties. *How weak is thine Heart* (saith God) *seeing thou dost these things ?* Ezek. 16. 30. Now as a ruinous Place or City is said to be restor'd, when it is rebuilt, and its Ruins repair'd ; so when the Soul recovers its Strength and Beauty, when its Faculties are so fortify'd, as to be able to withstand the Force of Temptation, then is it said to be restor'd. And

this is one thing we here pray for, that our Souls may be restor'd to their antient Vigour and Glory, that they may be edify'd in all Vertue, and built up in the most holy Faith. Moreover,

Sin robs the Soul of all true Comfort and Consolation, for it deprives us of the Favour of God, and excludes from the Hopes of Salvation. *David* in this, and some other Psalms, seems to have lost all Sense and Feeling of the Favour of God; his murdering of *Uriah* and defiling of *Bathsheba*, took away all his Peace, and fill'd him with nothing but Sorrow and Trembling. Under these sad Apprehensions, he goes and confesses his Sins unto God, and prays to be restor'd unto his lost Love and Favour; saying, in the twelfth Verse of this Psalm, *Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.*

In like manner, our Iniquities still disturb the Tranquility of our Mind, they deprive us of all solid Comfort and Joy in God, and create the greatest Trouble and Disquiet to us: for *there is no Peace to the Wicked, saith my God; Isa. 48. 22.* Now 'tis God only that can heal a wounded Spirit, he alone can remove this Load of Heaviness from the Soul, and restore to it the Voice of Joy and Salvation. And 'tis Repentance only that will move him so to do. Hence the Church's Petition is, *Restore thou them that are penitent*; that is, such as back their Confession with Resolutions of Amendment, and so are sorry for their Sins after a godly sort, which puts them upon Endeavours of reforming all they have done amiss. And this will lead me to the

Third and last Petition, added to make Confession effectual; and that is, That *God would grant for Christ's sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober Life.* This refers to the Power, as the two former did to the Punishment and Pollution of Sin: and as we pray'd before to be deliver'd from the Guilt and Stain of our Iniquities, so do we beg of God here to subdue the Dominion of them by the Power of his Grace, that Sin may not reign in our mortal Bodies; but where Sin abounded, there Grace may much more abound. And to that end, we beseech him to enable us to lead a godly, righteous, and sober Life in this present World, which are the three great Branches of Vertue, and contain the Sum and Substance of all Religion; the first comprizing our whole Duty to God, the second to our Neighbour, the third to our selves: of

of which, to direct you to be true Penitents, something will be needful to be spoken. And,

(1.) We pray for Grace to *live a godly Life*, in the Observance of all the Duties of Piety that we owe to God; that is, to worship him as our Maker and Preserver, to honour him as our Lord and Master, to have a continual Fear and Awe of him upon our Minds, to love him above all things, to put our whole Trust and Confidence in him at all times and in all conditions, to obey his Laws, and serve him truly in the whole Course of our Life. This is a brief Summary of the Duties we owe to God, and are the main Branches of a godly Life; which we are therefore to pray for, that they may grow and thrive in us.

(2.) We here pray for Grace, to *lead a righteous Life*, in observance of all the Duties we owe to our Neighbour; that is, *to do unto all Men as we would they should do unto us*; to honour all Men in the Places and Stations wherein God hath set them; to be true and just in all our Dealings, firm to our Words, faithful in our Promises, and honest in all our Bargains and Contracts with one another; *not defrauding or going beyond our Brother in any matter, but giving to all their due*, without taking away or withholding any thing from him; to *render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's*; that is, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, and Tythes to whom Tythes are due; not falsifying with God or his Ministers in that part of our Substance, which he hath reserv'd to himself, and dedicated to the Service of the Altar; to entertain no Malice or Hatred in our Heart towards any, and much more to abstain from doing them any harm in Body, Goods, or Name; but rather to be ready to all the good Offices of Love, Kindness, and Charity to all Men. This is briefly the Sum of the second Table of the Law, which contains all the Duties we owe to one another. And because we have many corrupt Principles and Temptations, that draw too strongly from the practice of these things, we are to beg of God to grant us his Grace to overcome them, and to be willing at all times, and in all cases, to do nothing but what is lawful and right; which is to lead a just, honest, and righteous Life.

(3.) We pray here for Grace to *lead a sober Life*, in observance of all the Duties we owe to our selves; that is, to be sober and temperate in all things, to use God's Creatures in those due and moderate measures that he hath ap-



pointed; to avoid all Gluttony in eating, and Drunkennes in drinking, and to watch against all Excesses and Intemperance in either; which are gross Abuses of God's Blessings, and of our selves in the use of them: to be humble and thankful in Prosperity, patient and submissive in Adversity; and in whatever state we are, to learn therewith to be content.

These are the Petitions which the Church here hath annex'd to Confession, to render it successful; for tho we acknowledg and bewail our Sins, yet without amendment, it will avail nothing to a Pardon: and because we are unable of our selves to reform our evil ways, we are to beg Grace and spiritual Strength, to be enabled so to do.

Which Petition we desire *our most merciful Father to grant for his Son's sake*, who hath purchas'd a Pardon for us, and promis'd it upon the Terms of Confession and Amendment, which we therefore *ask in his Name*; having told us, *that he will do it for us, that his Father may be glorify'd*, John 14. 13. And therefore 'tis added in the Close, *To the Glory of his holy Name*. For as by a bad Life we dishonour our Profession, and *blaspheme his holy Name*, so by good Works we are said to *glorify our Father which is in Heaven*: For *herein is my Father glorify'd* (saith Christ) *that ye bring forth much Fruit*; which Fruit will redound not only to our own Good, but to the *Praise and Glory of God*. All which, we shut up and seal with *Amen*, to signify our full Assent and Consent to it. So that we shall be condemn'd out of our own mouth, if we live and act contrary hereunto.

To conclude then, Let us daily and duly confess our Sins unto God; and that we may obtain Mercy and Pardon of them, let us pray for that *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation*; that we may *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lust*, and live *righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present World*: Which God grant for the Merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.



## DISCOURSE XXI.

JOHN XX. 23.

*Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retain'd.*

**A**FTER the general *Confession* before explain'd, follows the *Absolution* or Remission of Sins, for the Ease and Comfort of poor Penitents; that they who are cast down with the Sense of their Sins, may be rais'd and reliev'd by the Assurance of a Pardon.

This *Absolution* (as the Rubrick tells us) is to be pronounc'd by the Priest alone, standing; the People still kneeling. Where we have the Person that is to pronounce it, and the Persons to whom it is to be pronounc'd; together with the Postures of both. The Person pronouncing it, is to be the Priest alone, who hath the sole Power of absolving, as we shall shew after; *alone* being taken not only in opposition to the People, but likewise to the inferiour Order of Deacons, who have no right to this Power, which is annex'd only to the Priesthood.

The Posture appointed in pronouncing it, is *standing*; for being an Act of Authority, 'tis fitly deliver'd in that gesture.

The Persons to whom it is to be pronounc'd, are the People, for whose benefit it was appointed; and these being in the humble posture of *Confession*, are to receive it upon their knees.

But to come to the *Absolution*, we may take notice therein,

I. Of the Preface, containing such Attributes and Properties of God, as may best serve to usher in the *Absolution*.

II. Of the Commission it self, or the Power of Absolution, with the Persons to and for whom it is granted:

III. Of the actual publishing and proclaiming of Pardon and Absolution.

IV. Of Petitions for Repentance, and Grace to make us fit and capable of receiving it. These things are all contain'd in this Form of *Absolution*, and contain the full Sense and Substance of it. Of the two first, I shall speak at this time ; of the two last, in the next.

I begin then with the Preface, which contains those Divine Attributes and Properties, as best serve to usher in the *Absolution*.

The first whereof is, the Attribute of *Almighty God* ; which signifies him to have all Might and Power both in Heaven and Earth, that he can do whatever pleaseth him ; and consequently 'tis in his Power and Prerogative to pardon Sins : Hence 'tis made a part of his Name, to be a *Pardoner of Iniquity, Transgressions, and Sin* ; that is, of all sorts of Offences ; *Exod. 34. 7.* God is the offended Party in all our Transgressions, and who can question his Power to remit the Offence ? He that gave us Laws, can dispense with them ; and having all Might and Power in his own hand, can forgive whom and when he pleases : which is sufficient Encouragement to seek and trust to him for it. But lest his Justice should interpose, and seek to hinder his acquitting the Guilty, he is stil'd,

2dly, *The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who hath made a full Satisfaction to Divine Justice for all our Sins. The Son hath merited our Pardon, and the Father hath promis'd it thereupon ; so that as his Mercy inclines, so his Justice now requires him to forgive, *1 John 1. 9.* Nothing now lies in our way, for as he is *Almighty*, he is able to pardon ; as he is *the Father of Christ*, who purchas'd it, he is ever willing and ready to bestow it : which is a farther Motive to expect and rely upon it. Moreover, to shew his Inclinations to Mercy and Forgiveness, he is describ'd,

3dly, By his *desiring not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he may turn from his Wickedness and live.* This we find God Almighty himself declaring, and, for the truth of it, in a manner appealing to Sinners themselves, asking the question, *Ezek. 18. 23. Have I any pleasure at all that the Wicked should die (saith the Lord God) and not that he should return from his ways and live ?* And then answers it himself, confirming the contrary with an Oath : *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked,*



*Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live : Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O House of Israel ?* Chap. 33. 11. God is backward to all Acts of Severity, which nothing but Mens obstinate Wickedness extort from him ; but he is forward to all Acts of Mercy and Pardon, upon the least submission and turning to him : He desireth not the Death, but delighteth in the Life of every returning Sinner ; to which end he exhorts and expostulates with these rebellious *Israelites*, saying, *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will you die, O House of Israel ?* And when he was driven to punish *Ephraim* for their Idolatry, see how passionately he expresses himself ; *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim ? my Bowels are even turn'd within me,* Hos. 11. 8. All which shew us his readiness to pardon and shew Mercy ; and this is the Sense of the Preface, with which the Church here ushers in the Absolution. From whence I proceed,

II. To the Power and Authority which he hath granted about it, and that follows in the next words : *And hath given Power and Commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his People, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their Sins.* Where 'twill be requisite to shew,

1. What this Power of Absolution is, and wherein it consists.

2. The Persons to whom this Power is given, and how.

3. The Persons for whom it is granted, or the Qualifications of such as are to receive the Benefit of it. For the

1. The Power of Absolution consists in removing the Guilt and Punishment of Sin, and receiving the guilty Person into Favour, as if he were perfectly innocent. This is variously express'd in Holy Scripture ; 'tis sometimes made the same with Justification, which is the acquitting of a Person from Guilt, and looking upon him as perfectly righteous. 'Tis oppos'd to Condemnation, which is a laying of Sin to his Charge. This Power is express'd in the Text, by remitting or retaining of Sin, which is the pardoning or punishing of it. 'Tis call'd sometimes the Power of opening and shutting the Kingdom of Heaven, which is by admitting into, or excluding out of the Church ; for none can be receiv'd into the Kingdom of Glory hereafter, but such as are admitted in-

to the Church or Kingdom of Grace here, call'd therefore the Power of the Keys. 'Tis call'd in St. Matthew, the Power of binding and loosing. Chap. 16. 19. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* Sinners are said to be tied and bound with the Chain of their Sins, to be holden with Cords, and to be in the Bond of Iniquity. Now to loosen this Bond, to unty those Cords, and so be freed from these Chains, is done by what we call the Power of Absolution or Remission of Sins: And so the words in St. Matthew are the same in effect with these in St. John, *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retain'd.* And this will lead me,

2. To the Persons to whom this Power is given. And they were first and chiefly to the Apostles of Christ, to whom the words of our Text were immediately spoken, but yet not so as to be confin'd to them only; for the Promise to be with them to the end of the World, could not be to them in their own Persons, who died a little after, but to them that should succeed in their Office to the World's end; to which time there will be as much need of this Office, and the Divine Assistance in it, as then when it was first given. Neither could the *ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι*, relate only to the end of that Age, but to the end and consummation of all things, when Time it self shall be no more.

Now this Commission was given to the Apostles and Disciples, in those words of our Saviour, a little before our Text, *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you;* that is, upon the same Errand, to teach and instruct the Church; with the same Authority to rule and govern it, and to ordain others to succeed in it; and with the same Encouragement to bless and prosper you in it. This Commission he sign'd and seal'd to them by his Holy Spirit; so the next words tell us, *When he had said this, he breath'd on them,* as a sign of Inspiration, and said unto them, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost;* by which he convey'd to them the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, to qualify and enable them for the faithful discharge of their Office; to which he subjoin'd the power of the Keys in the words of the Text, *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retain'd.* Which Power was granted not to St. Peter only, as some would

would have it, who make him the sole Key-keeper of the Kingdom of Heaven; but to the other Apostles also, who as they all join'd in the Confession made by St. Peter in their Name, so did they all receive the same Answer and Commission from him; and so do all, who by a due and regular Ordination follow them in teaching and ruling his Church. Hence our Church here tells us, that *he hath given Power and Commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce this Absolution and Remission of Sins.* He that hath a just Authority of doing any thing, may either do it himself in Person, or depute others to do it in his stead.

The Power of *remitting or retaining of Sins*, is originally in God only, and in Christ as God and Man; for which reason the Son of Man is said to have power to forgive Sin.

This Power Christ exercis'd himself in Person, during his stay upon Earth; but being to ascend up to Heaven, he delegated it to his Apostles and their Successors, in these words, *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted, &c.*

And as this Power is given to them, so have they Commandment to declare and pronounce it; to be God's Heralds to proclaim Pardon to Penitents, to dispense his Mercy, and to loose the Bonds of Iniquity, by Absolution and Remission of Sins.

Now this Power of pardoning is annex'd to some Acts of Religion, instituted by God for this purpose, and executed only by Christ's Ministers. As,

(1.) Baptism was ordain'd for the Remission of Sin; so St. Peter told his Converts, *Acts 2. 38. Repent and be baptiz'd every one of you in the name of Christ, for the Remission of Sins.*

(2.) The Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist was instituted for this purpose, as we read, *Mat. 26. 28. where Christ's Body is said to be broke, and his Blood shed for many, for the Remission of Sins.*

(3.) The preaching the Word is for the proclaiming of Pardon, call'd therefore the Ministry, or Word of Reconciliation, *2 Cor. 5.*

(4.) The Prayer of the Elders over the Sick hath join'd to it the Forgiveness of Sins, *James 5. 14.*

Now these Ministerial Acts for the Remission of Sins, are peculiar only to the Priest's Office; neither is the Virtue or Effect of them to be imparted by any other: for  
to



to them it is said, and to no other, *Whose Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them*; and therefore a Pardon pronounc'd by them must be of greater efficacy, than by any ordinary Person.

But are the Ministers of Christ hereby empower'd to pardon the Sins of all Men? And shall the Offences of every one, whom they think fit to remit, be remitted unto them? No, 'tis to *People being penitent*, which is after explain'd, and confin'd only to such as *truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his Holy Gospel*. Tho the words are deliver'd in general and indefinite Terms, for the Comfort and Encouragement of all returning Sinners; yet they may not be interpreted so as to extend to the Sins of all Men, who wilfully persist in their Impieties, but must be restrain'd to those only, who by Faith and Repentance make themselves capable of it; for God himself will pardon none but such, and we may be sure he never gave any power to pardon any other. This is every where the Sense and Language of Holy Scripture; suitable whereunto our Church hath three Forms of Absolution in her publick Liturgy, all which are confin'd only to penitent and returning Sinners.

The First is Declaratory, in this daily Absolution, that is order'd to follow the Confession, wherein the Priest is empower'd to *declare and pronounce to his People, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their Sins*: which is more than a Proclamation of Pardon by other Persons, who have no such Authority to publish it.

The Second is Petitionary, in the Communion-Service, where the Priest prays to God, who hath *promis'd Forgiveness of Sins to all them, that with hearty Repentance and true Faith turn unto him, to have mercy upon them, and to pardon and deliver them from all their Sins*: Which Prayer of the Priest is of greater force, and will prevail more than any others without this Commission; as we may learn from *Acts 8. 24. & Jam. 5. 15.*

The Third is Judiciary or Authoritative, in the Office for the Sick, where the Priest, upon the hearty Confession and Desire of the sick Person, is empower'd to say, *Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left Power to his Church, to absolve all Sinners that truly repent and believe in him, of his great Mercy forgive thee thine Offences; and by his Authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy Sins.*

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This Power was given for the Ease of dying and despairing Persons, and must therefore be us'd with great Tenderness and Discretion; and the rather, because the Sentence duly pronounc'd on Earth will be ratify'd in Heaven, and determine their future and final State.

Thus we see something of this great Blessing of Absolution, which Christ hath vouchsaf'd to his Church, together with the Persons authoris'd to dispense it, which are the duly call'd and ordain'd Ministers; and likewise the Persons who are to receive the benefit of it, which are all that confess their Sins with an humble, penitent and obedient Heart.

I shall close up this Discourse with two or three things by way of Application. And,

*First*, We may infer from hence the great Honour and Dignity of Christ's Ministers, who are *call'd not of Men, but of God*. The Honour due to any Messenger, proceeds partly from the Greatness of the Person sending him, and partly from the Excellency and Importance of the Message deliver'd by him: Upon both which Accounts the Clergy may justly be thought *worthy of double Honour*; for their Commission is from Heaven, being appointed by God the Father, given by God the Son, and seal'd by God the Holy Ghost; and sure none can be sent by higher or greater Persons: for which reason the Apostle wills *every one so to account of them, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. And as Ambassadors are honour'd for the Prince's sake, whom they represent; so ought the Ambassadors of Christ to be had in the highest Honour, for the sake of him that sent them. But besides the greatness of the Person sending, the greatness of the Work about which they are sent may teach us (as the Apostle directs) to *esteem them highly in love for their Works-sake*: For they treat with you about the great Affairs of Heaven, of Eternity, and of the Salvation of your Souls; things infinitely above the trifling Concerns of this Life. They dispose of God's Mercy, and seal Pardons to penitent Sinners, and are sent to offer and conclude a Peace between God and Man; an Employment fit for Angels, and above the rate of common Mortals: And therefore we find St. Paul, who was little given to boasting, forc'd to *magnify his Office*, when false Brethren and Sons of Belial began to disparage and vilify it.

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And certainly this was never more necessary to be done, than in our corrupt and degenerate Age; wherein all sacred Things, as well as Persons, are unhappily become the contempt and scorn of Fools.

In short, Christ's Ministers are *Fellow-workers with God*, and Instruments of the greatest Good to Mankind; for they are the Dispensers of God's Pardons, and the Heralds to proclaim Peace between Heaven and Earth, and therefore should be receiv'd and respected accordingly.

You know, the bare Rumour of a Pardon from such as have no Authority to give or bring it, yields little or no comfort to a condemn'd Person; but a Pardon from the Prince, brought by the proper Officer, affords great Consolation. And such is the Remission of Sins declar'd and pronounc'd by Christ's Ministers; it being granted by God, and sent unto you by them: which should make you say with the Prophet, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of good things?* Isa. 52. 7. & Rom. 10. 15.

Secondly, From the Divine Authority and Commission of Christ's Ministers, we may infer their obligation to Fidelity, and to answer the End and Design of their Mission. 'Tis requir'd of Stewards (saith the Apostle) *that they be found faithful*, 1 Cor. 4. 2. And this is more especially requir'd of the Stewards in God's Household, who are faithfully to discharge the Trust committed to them, and to dispense to every one their Meat in due season; that they may not exceed the bounds of their Commission by absolving the Impenitent, nor yet come short of it, by withholding it from them that truly repent. Let not Christ's Ministers then fear the face or frowns of Men, in the delivery of their Message; but exhort and rebuke with all Authority, knowing that 'tis Christ's Work in which they are engag'd, that he will bear them out in doing their Duty, and reward them for all they shall suffer for it.

Thirdly, We may infer hence the People's Duty towards Christ's Ministers, which is to receive their Instructions, and submit to their Authority; otherwise Christ's sending them to teach and to rule his Church, would be to no purpose, if the People are not to be taught and rul'd by them. And because they have a power of absolving the truly Penitent, let the People qualify themselves, by true Repentance, to receive so great



great a Blessing from their hands; to which end, let them pray to God for Grace so to do, without which they are unable to do it. And this will lead to the second Part of the Absolution, of which in my next.



## DISCOURSE XXII.

ACTS V. 51.

*Him hath God exalted, with his Right Hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance unto Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins.*

**I** Am explaining to you the Form of *Absolution*, as 'tis deliver'd by the Church after the *Confession*. In which I observ'd,

I. The Attributes or Titles given to God, to usher in the words of Absolution, and they are, *Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; together with the Properties ascrib'd to him, to shew his inclination to Mercy and Pardon, in these words, *Who desireth not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he may turn from his Wickedness and live.*

II. The Power and Authority of Absolution granted, together with the Persons to, and for whom it is given, in these words; *And hath given Power and Commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his People, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their Sins.* Of both these I treated in my last. I proceed now,

III. To the Minister's actual declaring and pronouncing this Absolution, in these words; *He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.* Where we may observe;

*First*, That the Minister does not presume to pardon or absolve in his own right, no nor yet to publish it in his own name, but only in the power and name of God or Christ, saying, *He pardoneth and absolveth*; where *he* refers

refers not to the Minister, but to Christ, who hath the power of pardoning. So the Apostle declares in the Text, *Him hath God exalted, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Remission of Sins.* The power of forgiving Sins is originally in God only, who hath likewise exalted his Son to this Power and Prerogative of giving Forgiveness of Sins; for which reason the Son of Man is said to have Power to forgive. And this Power he hath given to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce with greater Authority and better Effect than to any others: which our Church here directs them to do; not assuming to themselves a Power of granting Pardons and Indulgences where they please, as is somewhere practis'd, for this is to be unjust Stewards of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; but to acknowledg God to be the Author and Bestower, and the Ministers to be only the Dispensers of his Favour, or the Witnesses and Messengers to bring them the certain News of it.

*Secondly,* We may observe here, that this Declaration, or pronouncing of Pardon, is not absolute and without limitation, but is confin'd only to such *as truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his Holy Gospel.* Repent, and believe the Gospel, saith our Saviour to all his Followers, *Mark* 1. 15. And his Apostles every where make these the Conditions of all the Gospel-Promises, without which there is no Remission: Repent (saith St. Peter) *that your Sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord,* *Acts* 3. 19. And St. Paul testify'd, *that Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, were the Terms of Absolution;* *Acts* 20. 21. Where these Conditions are found, none may condemn; and where they are wanting, none may acquit. So that from this part of the Absolution we may infer two things: the one relating to the Minister who is to pronounce it; the other to the People to whom it is pronounc'd. For the

1<sup>st</sup>. The Minister is here directed to absolve none but the Penitent, and likewise to publish a Pardon to all that truly repent. Christ, who is *exalted to give Forgiveness of Sin,* hath promis'd it to none but such as are meet to receive it, and they are the true Penitent and the sound Believer: for tho he said to his Apostles, and those that succeed them in the Work of the Ministry, *Whose Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose Sins ye retain,*

retain, they are retain'd; yet the Effect of both depend upon the Conditions and Qualifications annex'd to them. Our pronouncing of Absolution is of no avail, unless it be ratify'd in Heaven; which it will not be, but upon the Terms of Faith and Repentance. He that knowingly absolves an impenitent Person, is a Betrayer of his Trust, and an unfaithful Dispenser of God's Mercy; and all such Sentences, being not within his Commission, are utterly null and void: and therefore if a Minister, either by a Mistake, or by Corruption, absolves where he should not, this being done, *errante clave*, will be altogether insignificant, because it will not be ratify'd by Him, who can alone give it all its Efficacy.

And as the Minister is to pronounce Pardon only to the Penitent, so is he to declare it to all that are so; he may not withhold it from any that are qualify'd to receive it, but must *declare and pronounce it to All that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the Holy Gospel*. In short, he is neither to go beyond, nor come short of his Commission, but duly observe the Bounds and Terms of it, and faithfully discharge it. Then,

2<sup>ly</sup>. For the People to whom this Absolution is pronounc'd, they may not either presume upon a Pardon, without observing the Conditions; nor yet despair of it, upon the performing of them.

1. I say, they may not presume upon a Pardon, without observing the Conditions of it. What the Conditions are, we have already seen; namely, Faith and Repentance, which he, who purchas'd a Pardon for us with his own Blood, hath requir'd of all that would have the benefit of it: And Christ, who is therefore *exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to grant the Remission of Sins*, hath assign'd these as the Terms of his bestowing it; so that it must be the height of Presumption and Folly to look for it upon any other. The Justice of God will not suffer him to acquit the Guilty, and he is of purer Eyes than to behold the least Iniquity, so as to approve of, or pardon it without Repentance; and therefore it cannot be but a dangerous piece of Arrogance and Presumption, to expect or depend upon the Remission of them any other way; and to trust to it, is but to lean upon a broken Reed, which will rather sink than support them.

And as they may not presume upon Pardon, without the Conditions requir'd to it, so neither should they despair  
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of it upon the performing of them; for that is to doubt of God's Veracity, and to call in question the Truth of all his Promises. He cannot justify the Wicked, nor condemn the Righteous: to presume upon the former, is to affront and defy his Justice; and to fear the latter, is to distrust and deny his Mercy. So that Presumption and Despair are the two Rocks against which many dash, to their utter perdition: And therefore *David pray'd against both; Keep back thy Servant* (saith he) *from presumptuous Sins, and let not secret Sins prevail over him.* 'Tis the pernicious Policy of Satan to run Men against the one or the other, knowing that he gains his point upon them by either. Sometimes he tempts them to build their Hopes of Salvation upon the sandy Foundation of external Privileges and Performances; and if he cannot persuade them to hope for Mercy without Repentance, he will get them to delay and put it off till 'tis too late; and from the Example of the penitent Thief upon the Cross, make them believe they may repent and be saved at the last hour. At other times he tempts them to despair of Mercy, from the Greatness of their Sins, and the Insincerity of their Repentance, as if it were not sound or soon enough. From both these Temptations, the fore-mention'd Example of the penitent Thief upon the Cross may afford us a Remedy: for there was one pardon'd at the last hour, that none may despair; and there was but one, that none may presume. If then we would receive any benefit by this Act of Grace, or Proclamation of Pardon, let us duly weigh and work in us the Conditions on which it is publish'd and granted: that is, in the first place, let us heartily repent, and resolve against all Sin, that it may not separate between God and us, and withhold good things from us. Next, let us labour for an unfeigned Faith or Belief of the holy Gospel, relying upon the Truth of God's Promises, and walking in the way of his Precepts; and both these will lead us in the path of Life, and open for us the gate of Salvation. But because we can neither repent or believe aright, without the assistance of Divine Grace, let us proceed to

The Fourth and last thing contain'd in this *Absolution*; and that is Petitions for the Graces of the Spirit to qualify us for this Mercy and Pardon: which is the Sense of these and the following words; *Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true Repentance and his holy Spirit, &c.* Where the

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illative Particle *Wherefore* shews the words to be an Inference from what went before; and they have a respect to all the preceding particulars, as so many Motives and Directions to put up our Prayer and Petition unto God.

As (1.) From his being an *Almighty God*, we may be well assur'd that he is able to do for us what we desire of him: And,

(2.) From his being *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, we may conclude him to be as willing and ready to help us, as he is able; especially considering, that he desireth not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should live.

(3.) From God's sending his Ministers with a power of proclaiming or pronouncing Pardon to all penitent Sinners, we have abundant encouragement to address to him for it; and because he will pardon none but the truly penitent, therefore upon all these Considerations *let us beseech him to grant us true Repentance*: that being the Condition of his Mercy, we pray him to work it in us, and to give what he requires, who alone can do it for us. For true Repentance is such a great and thorow Change of the Mind, as we cannot make for our selves; it bespeaks such an absolute Command of our Will and Affections, and such a compleat Victory over our Lusts, Passions and Appetites, that nothing but the Power of divine Grace can work or effect in us: And therefore our recourse must be to him, who alone can give *Life to the Dead*, and bring *Light out of Darkness*, and turn us from the power of Satan unto God. Let this then quicken our Devotion, and send us to him for true Repentance, from whom every good and perfect Gift cometh. And let us pray not only for true Repentance to qualify us for Mercy, but let us beseech him likewise to grant us his *Holy Spirit*, which alone can work it in us: for that alone can enlighten our Minds, mollify our Hearts, and help us to amend our Lives. And our Saviour hath given us sufficient encouragement to make this Request; for he hath told us, that earthly Parents are not more ready to give good Gifts to their Children, than our heavenly Father is to give the *Holy Spirit* to them that ask it. But here we may observe from the Order of the words, that Repentance must go before, to prepare the Soul for the coming of this Holy Spirit: for this Spirit of God is a Spirit of Holiness and Purity, and will not enter into a corrupt Heart, and much less inhabit a polluted Mind. All filthy Lusts and impure Desires must be banish'd and purg'd out from thence,

to make room for this divine Guest : for if *the unclean Spirit* had his House swept and garnish'd against his Return, as we read *Mat. 12.* how much more ought the Mansion of the Holy Spirit to be kept pure and clean ? And if we expect his coming into our Hearts, we must prepare the way for him by the Doctrine and Practice of Repentance, Let us pray then for Repentance, as the Harbinger of the Holy Spirit ; and that will bring Faith and all other Graces along with it, to make us capable of Mercy and Pardon. And this will lead me on to consider the End, Use, and Benefit of this Prayer for Repentance and God's Holy Spirit ; of which three Reasons are here given :

1<sup>st</sup>, To obtain Acceptance of our present Services, in these words ; *That those things may please him, which we do at this present.*

2<sup>dly</sup>, To procure Assistance for what we shall do hereafter, *That the rest of our Life hereafter may be pure and holy.* And,

3<sup>dly</sup>, To arrive at last to eternal Happiness ; *So that at the last we may come to his eternal Joy :* and all this, through *Jesus Christ our Lord.* Of each of these briefly.

And, 1<sup>st</sup>, We are advis'd and directed to pray for Repentance, and God's Holy Spirit, *that those things may please him, which we do at this present.* Of what consequence it is to please God, upon whom all our Hopes of Happiness depend, I suppose few can be ignorant : this is, or ought to be, the main Desire of all Christians. *David* pray'd, *that the Words of his Mouth, and the Meditations of his Heart, might be always acceptable in his sight ;* *Psal. 19. 14.* And the greatest Blessing he could wish in the behalf of the People, was, that God would *remember their Offerings and accept of their Sacrifices, so as to grant their Desire, and fulfil all their Mind ;* *Psal. 20. 3, 4.* Now that Repentance and the Graces of the Spirit are the best means to obtain this Acceptance with God, is no less evident from the whole Tenour of Holy Scripture : *Repent (saith St. Peter) that your Sins may be blotted out from the presence of the Lord :* And, *Ye are justify'd by Faith (saith St. Paul) and being so, ye have peace with God ;* *Rom. 5. 1.* 'Tis Sin that deprives us of all divine Favour, and hinders the Acceptance both of our Persons and Prayers : Impenitence moves his Displeasure, and *without Faith 'tis impossible to please him.* Now Repentance and Faith remove all these Obstacles of Impenitence and Infidelity, and render our Persons



Persons and Services acceptable and well-pleasing to him; which is a very great Motive to induce us to pray and endeavour for them.

But *the things which we* are here said to *do at this present*, and desire may be *pleasing unto God*, relate chiefly to the People's daily confessing their Sins, and the Minister's pronouncing Absolution thereupon; neither of which can be of any use or virtue without Repentance and the Graces of God's Holy Spirit: And therefore to obtain their effect, our Church immediately annexes this Petition; *Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true Repentance and his Holy Spirit, to the end that those things, viz.* Confession and Absolution, which we are then about, may have their due influence and efficacy upon us, and so bring in those Blessings and Comforts, which are by promise annex'd and entail'd upon them. If we join Repentance to our Confession, and truly forsake the Sins we acknowledg and bewail; if our Hearts melt into Tears of Sorrow and Contrition for them, and add thereunto the Amendment and turning from our evil ways, God will ratify the Sentence of Absolution pronounc'd by the Priest; he will accept us and our Service, and be well pleas'd with such Sacrifices. Then shall we obtain *Enoch's* Testimony of pleasing God, for our Prayers then will come before him as Incense, and what we do at present will yield a sweet-smelling Savour.

2dly, Another Motive or Encouragement to pray for Repentance and God's Holy Spirit, is, *That the rest of our Life hereafter may be pure and holy.* Where, to the present Acceptance of our Services, is added the future Assistance of our Endeavours in the whole Course of our Life. Without the divine Aid and Assistance, we can neither begin or continue a holy and vertuous Life. Now 'tis Repentance that must enter us upon this Course, and help us to walk on in it; for without that, we shall still wander in the ways of Error and Destruction. And 'tis God's holy Spirit that can alone establish and preserve us in the ways of Purity and Holiness, which lead to eternal Life. And therefore our Church piously directs us to pray for Penitence to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness, and to be very pressing for God's holy Spirit, to enable us to lead pure and holy Lives. This is the way to obtain Audience and Success to our Petitions, and to render both the People's Confession and the Priest's Absolution effectual to the Ends for which they are prescrib'd and pronounc'd. And

both these will so guide and govern all our Actions, that *at last we may come to his eternal Joy*: Which is the

Last and greatest Encouragement to all our Prayers; which, if duly perform'd, will in the end bring us to everlasting Joy and Happiness. We receive some Earnest and First-fruits of it here, in the peace and quiet of a good Conscience; but the Completion of it will be hereafter, in *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*. Then no Cares or Fears will be able to allay or abate our Delights, nor any Sorrow or Sighing interrupt our Joy, which will be pure, unmix'd, and never-ceasing. All Confession of Sin will then cease, with the Commission of it, and Absolution end in the Consummation of Bliss and Glory. Our Prayers then will be turn'd into Praises, the Pardon now seal'd will then be deliver'd to us, and all our Hopes of Mercy swallow'd up in Fruition and the Beatifical Vision: which things we are here taught to ask *thro Jesus Christ our Lord, for him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to grant Repentance and Remission of Sin*. 'Twas he that purchas'd Redemption and Forgiveness for us, which we could never compass for our selves; and 'tis by his Merits and Mediation alone, that we obtain any share or interest in it. And therefore all our Addresses for it must be made in his name, and offer'd for his sake; to which our Church teaches us to add our Assent, by saying, *Amen*, Even so be it unto us.

Thus I have explain'd to you all the material Parts of this *Absolution*: We see the power of Pardoning is originally in God only, whose Royal Prerogative it is both to acquit and condemn. This Power he hath by Commission granted to his Ministers, whom he hath made the Dispensers of his Mercy, and Proclaimers of Pardon to Mankind; for which reason we are to have them in high estimation, saying with the Apostle, *How beautiful are the Feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of good things?* Rom. 10. 15.

We have seen likewise the Qualifications of the Persons to whom alone Absolution is to be pronounc'd, which is to the truly penitent and sincere Believers of the holy Gospel: to all, and only these, God hath given Commandment to declare and pronounce the Remission of Sins. So that as none may presume upon it without these Terms, so none may despair of it, where these Condi-  
tions

tions are found. And therefore our great business is to beseech God to work these Qualifications in us, to make us capable of his Mercy and Pardon; and to that end, to give us true Repentance, to turn us from the love and practice of all Sin, and to hate every evil way; not indulging any one beloved Vice, neither committing Robbery for Burnt Offerings, nor seeking to defraud any upon pretences of Charity: but to be honest in all our Aims, and fair and just in all our Dealings. To which we must add our Prayers for the Graces of God's holy Spirit, to lead and keep us in the right way: And then the Absolution duly pronounc'd by Christ's Ministers here on Earth, will be hereafter ratify'd and confirm'd by Christ himself in Heaven. Which God grant, for the Merits and Mediation of our only Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*





*From the Lord's-Prayer, after the  
Absolution, to the Creed.*

DISCOURSE XXIII.

St. LUKE XI. 2.

*He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father,  
which art in Heaven, &c.*



OUR Church having prepar'd our way to the Throne of Grace by *Confession* and *Absolution*, which are like the Washings and Purifications of the *Jews* before they approach'd the Altar, next enters us upon our Devotion with the Lord's-Prayer: wherein she conforms to the Practice of the primitive Church, which began and ended her publick Service with this divine Form. So \* *Tertullian* tells us, that the Lord's-Prayer being the Foundation upon which all other Prayers are to be built, therefore the Church began with it; that so the right Foundation being laid, they might go on to their ensuing Requests. And St. *Austin* adds, that this being the Perfection of all Prayer, therefore we conclude our Prayers with it: *Epist.* 59. And St. *Cyprian* declares, that our

\* *Tertull.* de Oratione, cap. 9.

Prayers never find better Acceptance with the Father, than when they are offer'd up in the words of his Son.

Accordingly, our Church after the *Absolution* orders us to begin with this Prayer, in these words of the Rubrick: *Then the Minister shall kneel, and say the Lord's-Prayer with an audible Voice; the People also kneeling, and repeating it with him both here, and wheresoever else it is used in Divine Service.* Where, beside the posture of Kneeling, of which I spake before, we may observe,

1<sup>st</sup>, The Author of this Prayer, who is our Blessed Saviour, call'd therefore the Lord's Prayer; together with the Matter and Form of it: both which are most divine, and therefore the most perfect, the most useful, and the most excellent.

2<sup>dly</sup>, A strict Charge and Command to use this Prayer; *When ye pray (saith our Saviour) say, Our Father, &c.* And the Minister shall say the Lord's-Prayer (saith our Church) and with such an audible Voice, that the People may hear and say it after him.

In explaining of this Divine Form, I must consider the three parts of it, *viz.* the Preface, the Petitions, and the Conclusion.

I. The Preface is contain'd in these words, *Our Father which art in Heaven.* Where we are taught to address to our Maker,

(1.) In the endearing Compellation of *Father*; to beget in us the Boldness of Children, and to come to him with an Assurance of being heard in all things necessary and convenient for us. Now we are taught here to call God *Father*, not only upon the account of Creation, in which sense he is said to be the *God and Father of all*; but upon the account of Regeneration and Adoption, whereby we are engrafted into his Family, and enabled to cry *Abba, Father*: which minds us of that filial Duty and Reverence we owe to him.

(2.) We are directed to address in the common Stile of *Our Father*, to teach us not to confine our Prayers to our selves only, but to extend them in the behalf of others, and to take in all Mankind, within the compass of our Devotion and Charity.

(3.) We are taught to address unto God as our Heavenly Father, or *Our Father which is in Heaven*; to signify his high Honour and Dignity, and likewise his Might, Majesty, and

and Dominion over us; that Heaven is his Throne, and the Earth his Footstool; and so all Power, both in Heaven and Earth, is his. Our Fathers upon Earth dwell in Houses of Clay, and so are impotent, and many times unable to help themselves or their Children; but our Father in Heaven is Omnipotent, and can do whatsoever pleaseth him: which is a Motive to approach to him with the greater Reverence and Affiance in him. This for the Preface.

II. For the Petitions, they are in number Six; three whereof relate to God, and three to our selves.

The First Petition that relates to God, is *Hallowed be thy Name*: where, by the Name of God we are to understand all things, by which he is pleas'd to distinguish himself, and to make himself known to us; as his Titles of Lord, God; his Attributes, as Immensity, Omnipresence, Justice, Omnipotence, and the like; as also his Word and his Works, as the Holy Scriptures, with all the Mysteries and Miracles contain'd and related in them. Moreover, by his Name, we are to understand all things that are call'd by his Name, and more peculiarly belong to him; as his Ministers, his Sabbath, his Sanctuary, his Revenue, and the Lot of his Inheritance: all which being denominated by him, and call'd his, are compriz'd under the Stile and Title of his Name.

By *Hallowing* of this Name, we are to understand, the thinking and upon all Occasions speaking honourably and becomingly of it; never to mention his Titles or Attributes, his Word or his Works, without the profoundest Awe and Reverence; to esteem all Persons and Things devoted to him as Sacred, and set apart from common to holy Uses, and to respect them accordingly, that is, to honour his Ministers, to sanctify his Sabbath, to reverence his Sanctuary, and to consecrate that part of our Substance, which he claims as his, to his Worship and Service, without any Alienation or Fraud: in a word, to have all things appertaining to him, or denominated by him, in the highest Esteem and Veneration; which is the Sense and Sum of this first Petition.

The Second is, *Thy Kingdom come*; where we may observe,

(1.) God's general Kingdom which he exercises over the whole World, and all created Beings in it, ordering and disposing all things according to the Counsels of his own Will.



**Will.** Of this kind is that of the Psalmist, *Thou hast prepared thy Throne in the Heavens, and thy Kingdom ruleth over all*: This Kingdom commenc'd with the beginning of the World, and will continue to the end of it, and so is not meant in this Petition. But, beside that, there is,

(2.) God's particular Kingdom which he exercises over his Church and People, ruling in their Hearts by Faith, and guiding them by his holy Spirit: of this is that of St. John, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; which being then newly publish'd and began, we pray here, that it may come upon and within us. And this Kingdom is twofold, the Kingdom of Grace here, and the Kingdom of Glory hereafter.

The Kingdom of Grace consists of all the sound Members of Christ's militant Church here on Earth, that list themselves under his Banner, and live in Obedience and Subjection to his Laws.

The Kingdom of Glory consists of all the Members of the Church triumphant in Heaven, that have finish'd their Course here, and are advanc'd to everlasting Bliss and Happiness.

By the coming of his Kingdom of Grace, is meant, the setting it up where it is not, and the preserving and increasing it where it is.

By the coming of his Kingdom of Glory, is meant, the hastening of his second Coming to Judgment, and receiving his faithful Servants into endless Glory with himself; which is what we pray for in this Petition.

The Third is, *Thy Will be done*. The Will of God is either secret or revealed; the former respects the secret Purposes of his Mind concerning the End and Event of all things, and this will be done whether we pray for it or no; the latter is the Discovery he hath made of his Mind to us in his holy Word, which we pray may be done by us: and this is double, the Will of his Precepts, shewing us what we are to do, and this is to be done actively by us, by doing what he commands; and the Will of his Providence, shewing us what we are to suffer, and this to be done passively, by bearing what he is pleased to inflict: in the one, we are to say with our Saviour, *I delight to do thy Will, O God*; in the latter, we are to use those words of his, *Not my Will, but thine be done*.

But because the doing the Will of God in Heaven, is made the Pattern or Platform of our doing it here on Earth,

Earth, 'tis requisite to know how the Will of God is done in Heaven, that we may the better imitate and conform to our Pattern: to which end we must know, that the Will of God is done by the Angels and glorify'd Spirits in Heaven;

1<sup>st</sup>. Readily without delay, for which reason they are painted with Wings to set forth the Nimbleness of their Obedience.

2<sup>dly</sup>. Chearfully without grudging, upon which account they are said to be still singing his Praise, and delighting in his Service.

3<sup>dly</sup>. Sincerely, without Hypocrisy, serving him not with masks, but open face, and doing all things with Singleness of Heart.

4<sup>thly</sup>. Thorowly, without Partiality, not picking and chusing in their Duty, but fully executing all God's Commands.

5<sup>thly</sup>. Unanimously, without any difference or dissension; there is no Clashing or Discord in those Heavenly Regions, but all happily join together in one entire and harmonious Consort.

Lastly, 'Tis done there constantly, without Weariness or Fainting; for they cease not Day and Night to cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts! and are never tired with their incessant Hallelujahs.

This is the manner of Saints and Angels, doing the Will of God in Heaven, and this is the Pattern set us for the doing of it here on Earth; the performing whereof, tho not so perfectly, yet as like and near it as we can, is what we pray for in this Petition.

These are the three Petitions that relate unto God; there are three more that relate to our selves: The

First whereof is, *Give us this Day our daily Bread*; where by Bread is meant not simply and singly plain natural Bread made of Corn, which is in Scripture stiled the *Staff of Life*, that *strengthens Man's Heart*; for tho this be included as the principal part, yet it is not the whole that is intended by it, for *Man liveth not by Bread alone*; and therefore by Bread here we are to understand all manner of Provisions necessary to the Sustenance of human Life. And because many things are needful to that end, as Food, Rayment, Habitation and the like, they are all compriz'd under the name of Bread,

By *daily Bread* is meant all that is necessary and convenient for us every day, and so 'tis the same with *Agar's Prayer*, *Feed me with Food convenient for me*. And this convenient Food is to be measur'd not barely by the Necessities of Nature, but by the Circumstances of Place and Station wherein God hath set us; for more things are necessary to one of a higher Degree, than another in a lower Station.

By *giving us* this daily Bread, we are taught, that our Provisions come not to us by way of Merit or Purchase, but purely by deed of Gift; that God is the Author and Donor of all our Mercies, that we live entirely upon his Bounty, that our Food and Rayment are all his, and we can have neither but by his Blessing and Providence.

By *giving us this Day, or Day by Day* our daily Bread, is signify'd our total Dependence upon God for every day's Provision successively. We may not rely upon Goods laid up for many Years, so as to think we have no need of God's constant Assistance; for he in the Gospel, who did so, was depriv'd of them that very Night: and therefore we are not to ask Provisions for any long time, for Years, or Months, or Days, but to ask every Day what is sufficient for that Day, and so to renew the same to Morrow, so on the day following; receiving our Bread as a daily Dole or Alms at God's Hand. And this is to be done by the Rich as well as Poor; Barns full of Corn, and Bags full of Coin are not to be relied upon, for they are subject to many Casualties, and all the Sweetness and Comfort of them depend wholly upon God's Blessing, which must therefore be daily asked by all.

Lastly, The term *OUR* daily Bread, denotes Bread that we may properly call our own; for every one is to live on his own, not another's Bread: 'tis the Drone that lives upon others Labours, whereas we are bid to *work with our Hand the thing that is good, that we may eat our own Bread*, Eph. 4. 28. The Bread we here ask is not stoln Bread, no Bread of Deceit taken out of another's Mouth, but our own Bread gotten by our own Labour, not by idle begging or stealing; it must be Bread earn'd by the Sweat of our own Brows, and procur'd not by Fraud, Sacrilege or Oppression, but gotten by honest and lawful ways: for this only is the Bread of God, that hath his Blessing going with it, whereas all other turns to Gall and Wormwood in the Belly. And now we see what we pray



pray for in this Petition, which is for Food and Rayment, and all the Necessaries of this Life. And because we cannot have our Bread without seasonable Weather, and the kindly influences of Heaven, we therefore pray here for such seasonable Weather, as may bring in the Fruits of the Earth in due Season: because we cannot enjoy our daily Bread without Peace, we therefore pray for Peace, that we may sit quietly under our own Vine, reap the Fruits of our Labour: because we cannot live in Peace, nor quietly eat our own Bread without Government, we pray for Kings and Queens, that we may *live peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty*. All these things, together with Health and Strength, and the Blessing of God upon all our Affairs, is what we ask in this Petition for our daily Bread.

The next Petition is, *Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us*; where mention is made of two sorts of Trespases, the one against God, and the other against our selves. Those against God are the Breaches and Transgressions of his Laws, either by omitting what they require, or committing what they forbid; the former are Faults of Omission, the latter of Commission. Those against our Neighbour are the Breaches of Human as well as Divine Laws, either by neglecting the Good or Right we ought to do them, or by doing the Evil or Wrongs we ought not to do them; both which have a Guilt or Obligation to Punishment annex'd to them. These Trespases are by St. *Matthew* call'd Debts, because they imply an Obligation to the thing commanded, or to the Penalty threatned to the Neglect of it. St. *Luke* calls them Sins, which signify the same thing, being all so many Violations of the Duty we owe to God, and the Demeanour we owe to Men; both which make us Debtors unto God, and expose us to the Censure and Punishment of Men.

By forgiving of Trespases here is meant the passing by the Wrong, without demanding any further Amends or Satisfaction: for as the forgiving a Debt is the blotting out the Score, or cancelling the Bond that oblig'd to Payment; even so the forgiving of Sins is the freeing a Person from the Guilt, and releasing the Obligation to the Punishment due to it, which is what we here pray for. And this our Saviour teaches us to ask upon the condition of our forgiving of others; *Forgive us our Trespases, as we*

*we forgive them that trespass against us.* So that unless we forgive others, we cannot expect to be forgiven our selves; for this is the Condition upon which it is promised, and this is the Condition upon which we desire it.

The last Petition is, *And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil.* Temptation is in Scripture sometimes taken for any kind of Trial or Probation by Affliction, or any sort of Calamity. So God tempted Abraham, by bidding him to sacrifice his only Son, *Gen. 22.* So he tempted Job, by trying his Patience in the loss of his Children, and letting in the *Chaldeans* and *Sabeans* upon him to spoil his Goods. And so he is often said to tempt his own People by trying them in the Furnace of Affliction, to discover their Temper and Inclination, and to exercise and improve their Graces.

In this sense, we are not always and absolutely to pray against Temptation; for tho *no Chastisement for the present be joyous, but grievous, yet it may afterward yield the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness, to them that are exercised therewith.* And therefore we are to pray against this with Submission to the Divine Will, and Resignation of our selves to God's Wisdom and Goodness; saying with our Blessed Saviour, *Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from us; nevertheless, not our Will, but thine be done.* But,

2. Temptation is most frequently taken for Enticement and Sollicitation unto Evil; by which Men are drawn into Sin, and discourag'd from their Duty: in which Sense God is never said to lead any into Temptation, for that would make him the Author of Sin, and the Encourager of that, of which he hath declar'd himself the Avenger; and therefore St. James cautions all Men against saying or thinking any such thing: *Let no Man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man; Jam. 1. 13.*

And in this sense chiefly are we to understand Temptation in this Petition, wherein we pray God to preserve us from all Sin and Wickedness, and from all the Baits and Snares that may lead or draw us into it; that we be neither allur'd into Evil by the Inveiglements of worldly Prosperity, nor affrighted from our Duty by the Terrors of Affliction and Adversity; but that we may be kept by the Power of his Grace from the Danger of both.

And this is what is farther pray'd for in the Close, to be *deliver'd from Evil*; which some understand of the Evil

Evil one, that is the Devil, who is still'd the Tempter, and the Accuser of the Brethren; from whose Power and Malice we here pray to be deliver'd: Others understand it of all the evil Effects and Punishments of Sin, to wit, the temporal Evils and Sufferings of this Life, and the everlasting Evils and Miseries of the next; from all which we are taught to pray to be deliver'd. These are the Petitions of this Divine Prayer.

III. The Conclusion or Doxology is in the last words; *For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and Glory, for ever and ever, Amen*: where the Particle *for* shews it to be added as a reason for putting up the foregoing Petitions, and as a ground of Hope and Confidence of obtaining them. And because Prayer cannot be compleat or effectual without Praises and Thanksgivings, therefore our Saviour added this Doxology, wherein all Honour, and Praise, and Glory is ascribed unto God: and our Church hath order'd it to be used in our daily Devotions; it being fit, when we ask of God the Supply of all our Wants, to return to him the Praises and Acknowledgments due for all his Blessings.

This is the Drift and Design of these words, *For thine is the Kingdom, &c.* where every word adds Strength to our Faith, and confirms our Hope and Confidence in him.

*Thine is the Kingdom*, signifies his Sovereignty and Supremacy over all the Princes and Potentates of the Earth; that all the *Kingdoms of the World are his*, being *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, to whom they must all resign their Crowns at his pleasure.

*Thine is the Power*, signifies that he hath all Power in Heaven and Earth, and so can assuredly provide for and protect his People.

*Thine is the Glory*, signifies that the Honour of all our Mercies and Blessings is to be paid to him, from whom we receive them: and that not only now and then, or for any limited space or term of time; but *for ever and ever*; his Kingdom, Power and Glory being everlasting, and world without end. To all which is added the concluding Term, *Amen*, to signify our unfeigned Assent and Consent to all the foregoing Petitions, and a hearty Desire of an Answer and Accomplishment of them. But for this see my larger Exposition of the Lord's Prayer, in the Church-Catechism, &c.



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## DISCOURSE XXIV.

PSALM LI. 15.

*O Lord, open thou my Lips, and my Mouth shall  
shew forth thy Praise.*

**I** Finish'd the last time the Discourse on the Lord's Prayer, that Divine and Excellent Model and Standard of all true Devotion, by which we are to form and regulate all our Prayers.

After which, our Church hath subjoin'd some short and pious Ejaculations taken out of the Holy Scriptures, in which the People are to join, and bear a part, to quicken and heighten their Devotion.

Of these, this which I have read to you is the first; where the Minister is order'd to say, *O Lord, open thou our Lips*; and the People to answer, *And our Mouth shall shew forth thy Praise.*

The words are taken out of *David's* famous penitential Psalm, and are to be found in most of the antient Liturgies of the Church; nothing being more proper and pertinent both for Minister and People, when they are about to offer up their solemn Prayers unto God, than to call upon him to *open their Mouths*, and enable both to sound forth his Praise.

But before I come to speak to the Words, 'twill be requisite to say something concerning this alternate way of praying to, and praising of God, by the Minister and People's taking their turns, against which some have made some frivolous Objections; as that the Scripture makes mention of the People's saying only *Amen* at the end of their Prayers; and to put them upon any more, hath no Foundation in the Word of God, and is no better than Will-worship; especially considering that the Minister is appointed to be the Mouth of the People, in presenting their Prayers unto God.

But tho the People said only *Amen* at the giving of Thanks, that is, in celebrating the holy Eucharist, which  
 † was

was the Office of the Priest; yet St. *Jerom* tells us, that *Populus cum Sacerdote loquitur in Precibus*, the People spake with the Priest in the other Prayers. *Pliny* tells us, that the Christians in his time sang their Hymns, *secum invicem*, that is, by turns and in parts. *Eusebius* declares, that the Priest and People answer'd one another in their Divine Service. *Ignatius* is said to bring this Usage into the Church of *Antioch*. And many of the antient Fathers make mention of Antiphonies and Responses in the publick Worship of God. But besides the Evidence of Antiquity, which is sufficient to justify this antient Usage of the Church, there wants not good reason to encourage so pious a Practice: for the People being equally concern'd with the Priest in the confessing of Sin, in Petitions for Mercy, and in publishing the Praises of God, there is great reason they should have their part in them, and not be debar'd from uttering these things with their own mouth; especially considering, that by this joining the Hearts and Voices together in publick Worship, we shew that Harmony and Agreement in what we ask, that our Saviour hath made necessary to the Success of our Petitions; and thereby not only with one Mind, but with one Mouth glorify our Maker. Besides,

This alternate way of praying by Minister and People, is apt to stir up and quicken the Devotion of both; for as one Coal kindles another, so the Heat and Zeal of the one may help to warm and enliven the other. A long continu'd Prayer by the Priest alone, is apt to beget Dulness and Drowsiness in the Hearers; for Length and Tedioufness blunt the edg of the Mind, and make it to grow weary and impatient: whereas the People's having a share in each Supplication, as in the Litany and other Responses, mightily awakens and enlivens their Devotion. Moreover,

This alternate way of praying, will help to fix the Mind, and engage the Attention to what we are about, in which we stand in need of all manner of Assistance: for our Minds are too apt to wander in holy Duties, wherein the People will not think themselves much concern'd, if they bear no part; whereas by having their share in it, they will expect and prepare for it, and so be ready for their part when it comes: and this will gather their Thoughts, and fix them upon the Duty, which will very much pre-

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vent these roivings and wandrings of the Mind, to which they are too prone in these holy Exercifes.

Hence it is, that the Minifter is order'd fo often to call upon us, in thofe words, *Let us pray*; to quicken us in what we are about, to call upon the Mind afrefh, and to renew its Vigor and Intention, that the People may be the better enabled and encourag'd to add their *Amen*.

But 'tis time to come to the words of our Text, here recited in the Liturgy; in which we may obferve,

I. A Petition, *O Lord, open thou our Lips.* And,

II. A Promise, *And our Mouth fhall fhew forth thy Praise.*

The former is to be utter'd by the Minifter, who is the Mouth of the Congregation, to offer and prefent our Petitions. And

The latter by the People, who are to answer and af-fent to it; according to that faying, *The Prieff's Lips pre-ferve Knowledge, and the People feek the Law at his Mouth.*

I. then, The thing here pray'd for, and utter'd by the Priest alone, is, that *God would open our Lips*; O Lord, open thou my Lips! The Petition is holy David's, who, in the Verfe immediately before, having pray'd to be deliver'd from Blood-Guiltinefs, in the matter of *Uriah*, promis'd thereupon that *his Tongue fhould fing of God's Righteoufnefs*; but finding himfelf unable to perform this by his own ftrength, he fubjoins this Petition, *O Lord, open thou my Lips*! which is as if he had faid, *Truth Lord, I have great caufe to declare and fing of thy Righteoufnefs, and have engag'd my felf by Promise fo to do*; but, alas! the Senfe of my Inability to do this of my felf, forces me to look elfewhere for Affiftance to effect fo great a Work. Be thou pleas'd therefore, O Lord, to prepare my Heart, and untie my Tongue, and then it may become a meet Inftrument to fet forth thy Praise.

The Lesson to be learnt from hence, is, That no Man can perform aright the Service of praifing God, until he be pleas'd to open his Mouth, and by his Grace enable him thereunto: for the Pfalmift, who was as much exercis'd in praifing God as any, here acknowledges his own weaknefs and infufficiency for this Work; he could not truft to himfelf, and therefore flees unto God for the affiftance



of his Grace, to enable him to perform it. There is such a Deadness in our Hearts, and such a Dumbness in our Tongue, that we can use neither to the Honour of our Maker, till he is pleas'd to quicken and move both to sing of his Righteousness. *Moses* complain'd of his uncircumcis'd Lips, and could not speak unto *Pharaoh*, till God had loosen'd his Tongue, and open'd the Door of his Lips. The Prophet *Isaiah* complain'd of polluted and unclean Lips, which till they were purify'd, would not suffer any good thing to pass thro them: *Isa. 6. 5. I am a Man of unclean Lips, and dwell in the midst of a People of unclean Lips.* The Prophet *Jeremy* said unto the Lord, *Behold, I cannot speak, I am a Child;* till the Lord put forth his Hand, and touch'd his Mouth, and said, *Behold I have put my Words into thy Mouth, and whatsoever I command thee, that thou shalt speak:* *Jer. 1. 6, 7, 8, 9.* We are not sufficient of our selves (saith the Apostle) to think a good Thought, or to speak a good Word, and much less to do a good Action; but all our Sufficiency is of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure, *2 Cor. 3. 5.*

But whence comes this natural Slowness and Backwardness of Speech? Why! this is occasion'd by our Sins, which naturally sink the Sinner into shame and silence. 'Twas *David's* Murder and Adultery that stop'd his Mouth, and shut up his Lips, so as to become mute and tongue-ty'd, till God was pleas'd to open both to shew forth his Praise. *Judah*, the most eloquent of *Jacob's* Sons, being conscious of a Fault, *knew not what to say*, and could not clear himself, Iniquity being found in him, *Gen. 44. 16.* *Zachary*, for distrusting the Message of the Angel, was stricken dumb, and remain'd speechless, till by the return of his Faith his Mouth was open'd, and his Speech return'd to him; *Luke 1. 20, 64.*

Sin and Guilt upon the Mind seal up the Lips, fetter the Tongue, and mar the Musick of our Praises: which made the devout Psalmist pray unto God, to open his Lips; and our Church, in the entrance upon our Prayers, hath taught us to do the same.

But how doth God open our Lips? Why!

1. By giving us some new and unexpected Mercy and Deliverance; so did he open the mouth of *Zachary*, by accomplishing that which he could not believe: And *David*, upon every new occasion of Thanksgiving, breaks forth

forth into a new Song, saying, *The Lord hath put a new Song into my Mouth, and many shall see it, and fear and put their Trust in him; Psal. 40. 3.*

2. God opens the Lips, by removing the Impediments of Speech, and cutting the Strings that held us tongue-tied; that is, by removing of Sin and Guilt, which impose Silence upon us, and render us unfit and unable to sound forth the Praises of God. Fear and Shame will strike us dumb before our Iniquities are remov'd; but when that is done, our Souls, like *David's*, will be satisfy'd *as with Marrow and Fatness*, and our Mouths will praise him with joyful Lips. 'Tis the sense and feeling of God's Love that puts Life into our Prayers, which else will be a cold, dead, and superficial Service. His pardoning Grace removes all Obstacles out of our way to him; and by thus opening his Heart in Mercy to us, he opens our Lips in Praises to him. And this he doth,

3. By exciting an inward Joy and Rejoicing in him, which will naturally break forth in Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving. The very Act of praising God, implies an inward Joy and Delight in him, which nothing but the Divine Grace and Goodness can work in us. Till God speak Peace to our Souls, we shall be speechless in his Service; or if we take upon us to speak to him, it will be to no purpose, 'twill be no better than the noise of sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal, which afford no melody: And therefore the Church orders the putting up of this Petition, in the beginning of the Service, *O Lord, open thou our Lips!* knowing that we cannot go on in it, without his help; but if he please to open our Mouth, our Tongue will utter his Praise, and become the Trumpet of his Glory. And this will lead me, in the next place, to

The Answer or Return here made by the People, who upon the Minister's saying, *O Lord, open thou our Lips*, promise and say, *And our Mouth shall shew forth thy Praise.* This is the Eccho or Return of the People to the Prayer of the Priest, wherein both engage to use their Tongue to the Honour of him that gave it, and to make both their Lips and their Mouth the Instruments of his Glory: which things are promis'd upon imploring the help of God's Grace and Blessing, without which, as we can do nothing, so with it we can do all things thro him

that strengthens us. Indeed where God is pleas'd to enable, there wants no sufficiency to set forth his Praise; if he open our Mouth, there is none can seal up our Lips: he can make the Mouths even of Babes and Sucklings to speak to his Honour, and perfect his Praise; for all the Instruments of Praise, the Head, the Heart, the Tongue, and all other Members are of his forming; and if he set them a going, they will all move to the magnifying of him. Above all, the Tongue will then become the Glory of Man, when 'tis employ'd to the Glory of God; and the Gift of Speech, where Man excelleth all other Creatures, is never better us'd than in extolling our Maker, which was the end for which it was given. Neither shall we want Assistance and Encouragement in making this use of it. When God Almighty sent *Moses* to be a Ruler and Guide to his People the *Israelites*, he would excuse himself, from a want of readiness and volubility of Speech for that Office; saying, *I am not eloquent, but heavy of Speech, and of a slow Tongue.* But upon God's replying unto him, *Go, and I will be with thy Mouth, and teach thee what to say,* we find he never wanted words either to speak to *Pharaoh*, or to instruct and conduct the People; as we read in the Book of *Exodus*. *Who is me* (saith the Prophet *Isaiah*) *for I am a Man of polluted Lips;* but when God was pleas'd to touch his Tongue with a Coal from the Altar, the Impurity was remov'd, and he had the Tongue of the Learned, able to minister a word in season to him that was weary: *Isa. 6. 5. & chap. 50. 4.* The like Complaint we find the Prophet *Jeremiah* making unto God, *Chap. 1. 6. I am a Child, and cannot speak.* But when God touch'd his Tongue, and open'd his Lips, his Word was in his Mouth like Fire, that serv'd both to enlighten and inflame; as we read, *Chap. 5. 14.*

In the Gospel we read of one brought to our Saviour, that was Tongue-tied, and had an Impediment in his Speech, beseeching him to lay his Hand upon him, and heal him. Our Saviour presently took him aside from the Multitude, and put his Finger into his Ear, and touch'd his Tongue, and looking up to Heaven, said, *Ephatha, that is, be open'd;* and straightway his Ears were open'd, and the String of his Tongue loos'd, and he spake plain: whereupon they went away praising and glorifying God, *Mark 7. 34, 35, &c.* The Apostles and Disciples of Christ being but ignorant Fishermen and Mechanicks, could say or do nothing in the



the business to which they were call'd; but when God open'd their Mouths, and taught them what to say, they had then a *Mouth and Wisdom, which none of their Adversaries could gainsay or resist*: For they spake to the wonder and amazement of all that heard them, and publish'd to all Nations the wonderful Works of God; as we read in the second and other Chapters of the *Acts* of the Apostles. By all which it appears, that if God open the Lips, the Mouth will be shewing forth his Praise; for he makes all Grace to abound towards such, so that they shall always have an All-sufficiency in all things.

The Use and Application I shall make of this Discourse, shall be by way of Direction both to Minister and People. The Parts of both are here set out; the one is to lead, to pray, and to call upon God to enable them, saying, *O Lord, open thou our Lips*; the other is to follow, to promise, and to close with it, saying, *Our Mouth shall shew forth thy Praise*.

1st, I say, here is Direction to the Ministers to be frequent and fervent in this Petition, that God would open their Mouths, and enable them to speak the Praises of the Lord. They are by Office more especially deputed to the setting forth of his Glory, and to declare his Righteousness in the great Congregation: and therefore they ought to be earnest and importunate in this Request, that they may be the Heralds and Publishers of his Praise. In the Book of *Malachi* we find God Almighty calling upon the Priests to give glory unto his Name, threatening those that neglected it, and commending *Levi* for observing his Covenant; that the Law of Truth was in his mouth, and Iniquity was not found in his lips; that he walk'd with God in Peace and Equity, and turn'd many away from their Iniquity: Thence inferring, that the Priest's Lips should keep Knowledge, and others should seek the Law at his mouth, for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts; *Mal. 2. 6, 7*. Our Church therefore hath inserted this Petition in her daily Service, making it the Minister's part to pray for the opening of his Lips, together with those of the Congregation; for they have the same natural Insufficiency for holy Duties with other Men, and till God touch their Lips with a Coal from the Altar, their polluted Lips can minister no Grace to the Hearers: But if God be with their Mouth, as he was with the Prophets and Apostles of old, they will

Speak as the Oracles of God, and their Tongues will be as the Pen of a ready Writer. Indeed, the best of us may say with St. Paul, *Who is sufficient for these things?* This is a Work too great for human shoulders without divine Assistance, which we are therefore daily to implore. No Man can speak the Language of *Canaan*, unless the Lord open his Lips and teach him; for he only hath the words of eternal Life, and they that will be thorowly instructed for the Kingdom of Heaven, must learn of him: and then we may say with the Psalmist, *My Lips shall speak of thy Praise, when thou hast taught me thy Statutes*; Psal. 119. 171.

2dly, Here is Direction likewise to the People, what they must do to perform their part; and that is, to join with the Minister in praying for the opening of our Lips, without which their Mouths will not be able to shew forth his Praise. 'Tis the complaint of some, that they find themselves heavy and dull in Divine Service, and cannot lift up their Heart and Voice in it as they ought; but the fault is in their own careless and sluggish Supineness: they say their Prayers, as Children do their Lessons, merely by rote, without minding or desiring what they say; and 'tis no wonder, if they find but little benefit and success from such heartless Petitions. If we did but open our Mouths wide in earnest and hearty Prayers unto God, he would soon open his Ears, and fill them with his choicest Blessings; he would soon give us a Door of Utterance to shew forth his Praise, and after that a Door of Entrance into his heavenly Kingdom.

These things we may be the more embolden'd to ask, because they tend to the setting forth of his Glory; which if sincerely intended by us, would soon incline him to hear and grant our Petitions.

In a word, to conclude this Discourse, we see here the Wisdom and Piety of our Church, in selecting and inserting this pithy Petition in our daily Devotion; which we should therefore constantly offer up with a zealous and true Affection: And then the God of all Power and Glory will so open our Hearts, our Ears, and our Mouths, as to make them all the Instruments of his Praise; and thereby render both the Words of our Mouth, and the Meditations of our Heart ever acceptable in the sight of God, our Strength and our Redeemer; which God grant; To whom be all Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and for evermore. *Amen.*



# DISCOURSE XXV.

PSAL. LXX. 1.

*Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord. Or as an old Translation hath it, to the same purpose; O God, make speed to save me; O Lord, make haste to help me.*

**T**HIS Sentence is the next pious Ejaculation, prescrib'd by our Church to be put up after the Lord's Prayer; which short Ejaculations were much used in antient times, and are commended by *St Austin*, as the most piercing kind of Prayer.

This is in our Liturgy divided into two Petitions: The one to be utter'd by the Minister, and the other by the People. The Minister's Petition is in these words, *O God, make speed to save us*; or, in the new Translation, *Make haste, O God, to deliver us*. The People's Part or Petition is, *O Lord, make haste to help us*. If we take the Sense to be the same in both, as indeed it is, the one being as the Eccho or Answer of the other; then 'tis doubling or repeating the same Petition twice out of Earnestness and Affection: which is no vain Repetition, but a pious and pithy Ejaculation, darted from the Heart and Mouth both of Minister and People, which oft-times pierces deeper and finds better acceptance with God, than longer and continu'd Orations; as an Arrow of a yard long is known to fly farther, and strike deeper than one of twenty. However,

Some willing to distinguish and make two different Petitions of them, understand the Minister's Petition, *O God, make speed to save us*, as a Supplication for Deliverance from all Evils both temporal and spiritual: And the People's Answer to it, *O Lord, make haste to help us*, as a Prayer for Aid and Assistance in all manner of Good. The former seems to be favour'd by the new Translation's rendering it, *Make haste, O God, to deliver us*; which relates only to Evils: The latter imploring his Help, *O Lord, make*



*make haste to help us*, seems to refer chiefly to his assisting us in that which is good. I shall speak to the Words in both these senses, as agreeing with the several Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, which they are here made to follow. And because the main stress of the Prayer seems to lie in God's speedy and seasonable granting these things to us, I shall in the last place add something touching that. Accordingly therefore I begin,

I. With the Petition to be utter'd by the Minister, in these words, *O God, make speed to save us*; or, as it is in the Psalms, *Make haste, O God, to deliver us*. And so 'tis an earnest Supplication to be sav'd and deliver'd from all Evil. The words are a Prayer of holy David, and are frequently found in the Book of Psalms almost in the same words; as *Psal. 40. 13. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me*. In the Verse before, he declar'd that *innumerable Evils were come about him, that his Sins had taken such fast hold of him, that he was not able to look up, for they were more in number than the Hairs of his Head, and his Heart fail'd him*. Being terrify'd with this prospect, he addresses unto God in this pious Petition, *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me*: which Address he often renews in the same or like words.

Indeed, David was surrounded with Enemies on every side, who were daily fighting and troubling him. Saul hunted him as a Partridge on the Mountains; his Son Absalom, by the Instigation and Policy of Achitophel, bent all his Wit and Forces against him: the Philistines and others made frequent incursions upon him; which made him say, *Lord, how are they increas'd that trouble me? Many there be that rise up against me*. Yea, to destroy all his Comfort and Confidence, there were many (saith he) *that said unto my Soul, there is no help for him in his God*. In these sad and forlorn Circumstances, his recourse was still unto God, praying him to vindicate his own Cause, as well as his Innocence; and to that end, to be his Defender and Shield, and to lift up his head above his Enemies.

And because we are daily liable to the same or like Troubles, our Church hath made it a part of our daily Prayers, that God would make speed to save and deliver us from all such Evils.

Now

Now the Evils we here pray to be sav'd and deliver'd from, are both the Evils of Sin, and the Evils of Suffering; the one being destructive to the Soul, and the other to the Body. So that when the Minister prays, *O God, make speed to save us*; he prays first and chiefly to be sav'd from the Evils of Sin, which are the worst of all Evils, and indeed the cause of all the rest: For all other Evils affect the Body only, whereas these ruin and destroy the Soul. *Solomon* tells us, that *he that sinneth against God wrongeth his own Soul*: And *St. Peter*, that *fleshly Lusts war against the Soul*. And what hinders the Salvation, must needs hazard the Damnation of them; for which reason we may well pray, to be sav'd and deliver'd from them.

Now the Evil of Sin consists in the Power, the Pollution, and the Punishment of it; from all which we here pray to be deliver'd.

As for the Power of Sin, that had its rise from the first Transgression, which brought Mankind under the Bondage and Dominion of it. Hence the Apostle speaks of *Sin's reigning in our mortal Bodies*, and enslaving us to the Lusts thereof; by which we are brought under the power and beck of every Temptation to it. To be deliver'd from this, we must pray for the renewing and strengthening Grace of God's Holy Spirit; which alone can vanquish the Power of Sin in us, and subdue the force of all its Temptations.

Then (2.) for the Pollution of Sin, that leaves a stain and filth behind it, that defiles the Soul, and renders it no better than a Cage of Uncleanneſs. And this is only to be wash'd away by the Blood of Christ, the Virtue whereof is convey'd to us by the Word and Sacraments, which help to cleanse us from all Sin, and to purge away all its Defilement. Then,

Lastly, For the Punishment of Sin, that is no less than Death, and that not a temporal Death only, but Death eternal and everlasting Damnation: from which we can be alone deliver'd by the pardoning Grace and Mercy of God, which we are therefore speedily and heartily to sue for. These are the Evils of Sin, from which we pray God to make speed to save and deliver us. But beside these, there are Evils of Suffering here in this Life, which flow from Sin, as Effects do from their Cause; and these relate to our Bodies, Goods, and Names, which are liable to Sickneſs, Oppression, and Disgrace; from which we likewise pray to be sav'd and deliver'd, so far that we may not be annoy'd

or hurt by them. In short, we are to look upon our selves as compass'd about with Evils of all kinds; Sin within does too easily beset us, and Dangers without too often threaten us: inasmuch that Fear is on every side, having no guard of our selves against the numerous Train of Evils that continually attend us. Our only Remedy and Relief in such cases, is to lift up our Eyes and Voices to Heaven, from whence cometh our Salvation. To this we are frequently directed and encourag'd, by many Promises of Succour and Deliverance. *Jehosaphat* tells us, that *if when Evil cometh upon us, as the Sword, Judgment, Pestilence, or Famine, we cry unto the Lord; he will hear from his holy place and help us*: 2 Chron. 20. 9. This *David* did upon all occasions, and found the Benefit and Success of it; and this our Church wills us daily to do. Being every day expos'd to new Dangers and Troubles, the Minister is every day to beg new Assistance and Deliverance; saying, *O God, make speed to save us*. From whence I proceed,

II. To the People's part; who are directed to answer in these words, *O Lord, make haste to help us*. Where, as the former sued to be sav'd from all Evil, so the latter pray to be further'd or help'd forward in all Good. Now the Good we stand in need of, is both temporal and spiritual; the one relates to the Support and Welfare of the Body, the other to the Happiness and Salvation of the Soul: in both we are to crave the divine Help and Assistance. All worldly Good or Success in the Affairs of this Life, depends intirely upon God's Blessing; and all spiritual good things relating to the Life to come, proceed wholly from the Assistance of his Grace and Favour: which makes it necessary to have recourse to him for the Supply of both.

And as 'tis thus necessary to crave the Help of God, as well for the attaining of Good, as diverting of Evil; so is this a Work highly pleasing and acceptable to him, because it betokens our intire Dependence upon, and Resignation of our selves to him, which he evermore takes well at our hands. Besides, the calling upon God to save, help, and deliver us, implies in it two things, which mightily tend to the setting forth of his Glory.

1st, A Sense of our own Weakness and Inability to save or help our selves: And,

2dly, A full Persuasion of the Ability and Readiness of God Almighty to do both for us, which will strongly engage him to do it,

1st, I



1<sup>st</sup>, I say, in this Petition of Minister and People for Help and Succour, is manifestly imply'd a Sense of their own Weakness and Inability to save or help themselves: for none will crave the help of another, who is able to help himself; and consequently the imploring the divine Aid and Assistance, signifies our great want of it, and our Weakness without it: which is an excellent Qualification of a Petitioner, and conduces much to the Acceptance and Success of the Petition. *Lord save us, or else we perish*, said the Disciples in a Storm; where the Sense of their Danger, and their own Inability, inclin'd our Saviour to help them; and their casting themselves upon him, engag'd him to keep them from sinking. *O God, we have no Might nor Strength against this great Company that cometh against us* (saith Jehosaphat) *neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee*; 2 Chron. 20. 12.

They that presume too much upon their own Strength, are commonly left to themselves, and so perish thro their own Arrogance and Folly; whereas they who are sensible of their own Weakness, and take God for their Helper and Defender, never fail of his Favour and Blessing; which made the Apostle ask the question, *Who is he that shall harm you, if you are Followers of that which is good?* implying that none will or can do it, when you are under the protection of an Almighty Arm.

2<sup>dly</sup>, As this Petition implies a Sense of our own Weakness, so doth it of God's Power and Readiness to help us; for none will address to another for Aid and Assistance, who he thinks is not able or willing to help him. And therefore we find *David* often acknowledging the infinite Power and Willingness of God, to save and deliver him from all his Enemies: *Thou, O Lord, (saith he) art my Shield, my Glory, and the Lifter up of my Head*. This gave him Courage and Confidence in him, so as not to be daunted at any Danger that threatned him: *I will not be afraid* (saith he) *for ten thousands of the People that set themselves against me round about; for Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, and his Blessing is upon his People*: Psal. 3. 3, 6, 8. He knew that God was able to defeat all the Designs of his Enemies, and if he stood by him, he should be sav'd in the greatest Extremities: which things being promis'd and confirm'd to him by many Experiments, begat in him a firm Trust and Reliance upon God; which made him say, that *tho many are the Troubles of the Righteous, yet God delivers*

*delivers them out of all.* He preserv'd the three Children in the fiery Furnace, so that not a Hair of their Head was sing'd : and likewise sav'd *Daniel* in the Lions Den, by stopping the mouths of those fierce Creatures, that they could not hurt him ; as we read in the third and sixth Chapter of *Daniel*.

In short then, the Meaning of this Ejaculation in the Text and Liturgy, is to be preserv'd from all Evil, and assisted in all that is Good : so that when we look backward upon our many great and heinous Sins, we cry out, *O God, make speed to save us* ; and when we look forward to the Good that we are to do, and the difficulty of doing it, we say, *O Lord, make haste to help us*. And our praying for both, signifies our Inability of our selves to do either, and likewise that his Grace will be sufficient for us in both.

But the main stress of these Petitions lies in the speedy and seasonable granting of them : for 'tis, *O God, make speed to save us* ; *O Lord, make haste to help us*. Where both the Psalmist and the Church seem to ask not only for Help and Deliverance, but that it may be done speedily, with all possible haste, and as soon as may be. For Evils increase by delay, and Time gives many advantages and opportunities to our Enemies. The Request intimates that the Greatness and Danger of the Evils that threaten or lie upon us call for speedy help ; and the need we stand in of what we ask, requires present Relief, and admits of no delay. Our Enemies make speed to pursue us, and they that hate us make all the haste they can to destroy us : *For lo ! the Ungodly bend their Bow, and make ready their Arrows within the Quiver* (saith the Psalmist) *that they may privily shoot at them that are true of heart* ; Psal. II. 2. And elsewhere, *They whet their Tongues like a Sword, and shoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words, that they may shoot in secret at him that is perfect* ; suddenly do they hit him, and fear not : And therefore he prays, *that God would suddenly shoot at them with a swift Arrow, that they may be wounded* ; Psal. 64. Where he desires God either to prevent or return the Evils upon themselves ; to make as great speed to save, as they do to ruin us ; and to be as hasty to do us good, as they are to imagine and do us evil. Speed in doing of it will add much to the Kindness, and the Seasonableness of the Deliverance will double the Blessing. *Bis dat, qui cito dat* ; he gives twice, that gives presently : and they that are most liberal, are most speedy in giving. And

And therefore God hath bid us to call upon him in time of Trouble, and he will help us in the Day of Distress: He will not defer to succour, if we do not defer to supplicate him; he who hath bid us not to put off doing good to our Neighbour to to-morrow, when 'tis in our power to do it to-day, will not defer the helping us in our Necessities; being always able to do it. This is what we desire of him, in saying, *O God, make speed to save us; O Lord, make haste to help us.*

But yet we are still to refer our selves to the Wisdom and Goodness of God, both for the Time and Manner of his delivering us; for he better knows when and how to help us, than we do our selves. Sometimes he permits the Rod of the Wicked to lie a while upon the back of the Righteous, either to exercise and try their patience, or to correct them for something found amiss in them. But when he finds it for their good, he is willing, upon their humble and penitent Address to him, to take it off.

Sometimes he thinks fit to withhold some good things a while, which they ask of him, either because they are not yet fit to receive them, or because he would have them ask a little longer and louder, intending to give them more than they ask or think. Sometimes, again,

God suffers the Enemies of his Church and People to lay their Plots, and to weave their Web with all the Fineness and Artifice of Invention: he seems to wink a while, as one that neither saw or took notice of them; till being arriv'd at the top of their Confidence, and expecting nothing but Glory and Success from their Enterprize, then of a sudden he is pleas'd to dash and defeat all their Hopes, and to bring all their Designs to nothing: of this we have had former and late experience. These are some of the Mysteries of Providence, and the secret Counsels of the Divine Will; which we are rather to admire and bless God for, than too curiously pry into them. And this may teach us to wait God's time for delivering of us, which is always the best; and still to say with our Blessed Saviour about the bitter Cup, *Not my Will, but thine be done.* However,

We are here taught and encourag'd by the Example of *David*, and other holy Men in Sacred Writ, to pray not only for a sure, but sudden Deliverance; that God would give us a speedy issue out of all our Troubles and Temptations; and with all due Submission to the Divine Will, make all possible haste to save and help us.



To draw then to a Conclusion; Let us, as we are here directed, put up our daily and hearty Prayers to be sav'd from all kinds of Evil both of Sin and Punishment, and to be help'd forward in all manner of Good, relating to this Life and that which is to come; and that both these may be done for us speedily and seasonably, as our Necessities and Occasions shall require: So shall we have cause to turn our Prayers into Thanksgivings, to set forth his most worthy Praise, and upon all occasions to break forth into the following Hymn of *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*: Of which in my next.



## DISCOURSE XXVI.

St. LUKE II. 14. former part.

*Glory be to God in the highest.*

Together with 1 JOHN V. 7.

*There be Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One.*

**A**FTER some pious Ejaculations for the Divine Assistance, our Church directs us to break out into that Seraphick Hymn of *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*: *As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end; Amen.* At which the Rubrick requires all to stand up, that being the posture of giving honour: And then the Priest to say, *Glory, &c.* and the People to answer, *As it was, &c.* This Hymn is by the Fathers stil'd, *The Christians shorter Creed*, because it contains the Sum of the Christians Faith in the Mystery of the Holy Trinity; which neither Jew nor Gentile, nor any other but the Christian only professeth to believe: the using whereof was design'd as a Test to distinguish Christians from Pagans, and all sorts of Hereticks that deny'd it.

The

The words of the Hymn are not to be found in express terms in the Holy Scripture, though it be sufficiently grounded upon, and held forth in it; for in *St. Luke's* Account of the Nativity of our Blessed Saviour, we read that the Angels brake forth in that Heavenly Song; *Glory be to God in the Highest*: that is, in the highest Heavens, where, as *St. John* tells us, *There are Three that bear record, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; and these three Persons being but one God, the same Glory and Adoration is due to each: which being founded on this and many other places in Sacred Writ, is express'd in this Divine Doxology, viz. *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, &c.* In which we may observe,

- I. The Matter of the Hymn; and that is, the giving *Glory unto God.*
- II. The Persons to whom 'tis given; and that is, *The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*
- III. The Manner of giving it; and that is, *As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end.*

But before I enter upon these Particulars, 'twill be requisite to shew the Occasion, Use and Antiquity of this Hymn.

For the Occasion or Origin of it, that was from a pestilent Heresy first broach'd by *Arius*, a Priest of *Alexandria*; who, from a Principle of Ambition and Discontent, denied the Divinity of Christ, and the Equality of the Three Persons in the Godhead: the Contagion of which Heresies spread and infected a great part of the World, to the great Disturbance and Peril of the Church; till *Constantine*, the first Christian Emperor, out of a pious Zeal for God's Glory, and the good of his Church, assembled that great Council of *Nice*, consisting of Three Hundred and eighteen Bishops, to debate of, and settle these great Points: which they accordingly did, not only by condemning those Heresies, but by composing that which is call'd the *Nicene Creed*, and this Hymn of *Gloria Patri*, to preserve the antient Catholick Faith in this Point of the Holy Trinity.

For the use of this Hymn, of *Glory be to the Father, &c.* we find it continu'd and deriv'd down from that Council, and hath been receiv'd and us'd in all Christian

stian Churches ever since, as it is with us to this day. And as the Church of *Antioch* appointed the saying or singing of this Hymn at the end of every Psalm, to declare and preserve the Belief of the Holy Trinity; so doth the same Practice still remain among us for the same end.

For the Antiquity of this Hymn, some think it to be of an antienter Date than the *Nicene* Council, from the Authority of *Clemens* of *Alexandria*, who hath the words of this Doxology, as the Christians Form of praising God, in the Year 100; which was above a hundred Years before the Council of *Nice*. But however that be, most certain it is, that the daily use of it in Divine Service was establish'd and enjoin'd by that Council, from whence the Custom is come down to us, who daily glorify each Person of the Blessed Trinity, in this Form of *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, &c.* In which, according to the Method mention'd in the foregoing Particulars, I shall consider,

I. The Subject Matter of this Hymn, and that is, The giving Glory to God, according to the Song of the Angels, *Glory be to God in the highest*. The Glory of any Person or Thing consists in some Perfection, wherein it exceeds others, and thereby gains some Eminence and Superiority above them.

Accordingly, The Glory of God consists in those Divine Excellencies and Perfections, whereby he infinitely surpasses all other things; such as his infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness, together with all his other Attributes of Immensity, Eternity, Omnipresence and the like; which far exceed all that we can say or think, and give him a Greatness infinitely above the Powers and Abilities of all created Beings in Heaven and Earth.

The giving this Glory unto God, is the setting forth in the best manner we can these his transcendent Attributes and Perfections; and then is God said to be glorify'd by us, when such his Excellency, above all things, is with due Admiration acknowledg'd; when his glorious Godhead is extol'd, and his Name and his Word magnify'd above all things. This is the Homage we all owe to the Divine Majesty, or the Divine Worship which is peculiar to him, and is not to be given to any other; according to that Precept of our Saviour, *Thou shalt worship the*



the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 'Tis that Seraphick Song mention'd by the Prophet *Isaias*, chap. 6: where the Seraphims are said to cry one to another, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and Earth are full of thy Glory*: And is the same with that Angelick Song sung at our Saviour's Birth, *Glory be to God in the Highest*; meaning that this is done by the Angels in the highest Heavens, and is to be done by us in the highest Degrees we can here upon Earth. Now this giving Glory to God consists, partly in the Mind, by an inward Esteem of his infinite Power and Greatness, exalting him in our Hearts, and having the highest and most honourable Thoughts of him in our Mind; and partly in the Tongue, by the outward manifesting of his Glory, and by the Voice setting forth and celebrating his Praise; and partly likewise in the Actions of the Life, by keeping up a constant Awe and Reverence of him, disclaiming all Worth and Merits of our own, and ascribing all Honour and Glory to him, to whom it is alone due; saying with the Psalmist, *Not unto us, Lord, nor unto us, but unto thy Name be all the Praise*. This is the Sense and Meaning of this excellent Hymn, which being the proper and principal Subject of all the Psalms of David, 'tis very fitly apply'd to them, and order'd to be added in the Close and Conclusion of each of them.

II. From the Subject-matter of this Hymn of Praise, I proceed to the Persons to whom 'tis to be directed, the main thing here to be consider'd, and that is to the Three Persons of the Ever-Blessed and Adorable Trinity, *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. And so this Form of glorifying God, is a publick Declaration of our Belief of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead; according to what St. *John* here tells us, that *there are three that bare record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one*; and therefore to be equally worship'd and ador'd, as we profess to do in this Hymn. The Hereticks of old, that deny'd the Co-equality and Co-eternity of the Three Persons, made some Alterations in this Form, and instead of, *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*, were wont to say, *Glory be to the Father, by the Son, and in the Holy Ghost*; affirming the Father to be greater in Honour and Dignity than the Son, or Holy Ghost, and so not giving

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the same Glory to all alike, but higher Degrees to the former, and lesser to the latter. But this is contrary to the Doctrine of the antient Fathers, and the Practice of the Primitive Church; who believing an Equality in the Three Persons, ascrib'd the same Honour and Glory to them all alike. St. Basil observ'd this in the Form of Baptism, and the Confession of Faith: for as in Baptizing we use the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and in confessing of Faith, we declare our Belief in all Three; so in ascribing Glory to God, we give it to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, concluding that we must, as we have receiv'd, even so baptize; and as we baptize, even so believe; and as we believe, even so give Glory.

The like may be observ'd in the Practice of the Apostles, who in all their Salutations and Benedictions of the People, join all the Three Persons in the same Forms of Blessing and Praise; saying, *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.* Where the same Honour and Adoration is equally given to each of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. And it favors more of Piety and Prudence to retain the antient Forms us'd in the Church, than to follow the new Models of Hereticks and Innovators.

But beside that we have sufficient Authority for this way of glorifying God, there want not sufficient Reasons for these particular Adorations; for all the Acts, Titles, and Attributes of the Godhead being given to all Three Persons, the same Divine Honours are to be ascrib'd to each: *There are three that bear record in Heaven* (saith our Text) *and these three are one*; and having all the same Divine Nature, they are all equally adorable. And as these Acts of Adoration are due to each Person upon the account of their Equality in the Godhead, so are we more particularly bound to pay them upon the account of some peculiar Blessings and Benefits bestow'd upon us by each: for we owe our Creation to God the Father, our Redemption to God the Son, and our Sanctification to God the Holy Ghost; and we shall be extremely wanting in our Duty to each, if we pay not a particular Tribute of Homage for their peculiar Blessings.

Thus we see the Subject-matter of this Hymn, which is the giving Glory to God, together with the Persons to whom 'tis to be given, *viz.* the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The



III<sup>d</sup>, and last thing to be consider'd in it, is the Manner of giving it; and that is, *As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever shall be World without end.* Where, for the manner of performing this Duty, we are directed to the time past, present, and to come: all which will afford Directions and Encouragements enough to excite us to the giving Praise and Glory to God. For,

(1.) It was so from the Beginning; God's Glory was the End of our Creation, and the principal thing aim'd at in all the Works of his Hand: *In the Beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth, Gen. 1. 1.* and both of them immediately set forth his Glory; for the *Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handiwork, Psal. 19. 1.* And elsewhere, *The Earth is full of the Riches of his Glory, and all the Creatures in it speak to his Praise.* In the Morning of the Creation, or the Beginning of Time, Holy Job tells us, that the *Morning-stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for Joy, Job 38. 7.* God Almighty had an essential Glory before the World began, and needed nothing to make any Accession to it; but when he thought fit to make the World, he did it for the publishing and manifestation of his Glory, and made it the Work and Business of all Creatures in it ever since so to do; but Man especially was appointed to be the Herald and Trumpeter of his Praise, which Office all good Men, in all Ages, have been ever careful to perform. The Patriarchs did it in the Beginning of the World, and the Prophets continu'd it in After-ages. The Apostles did it in the first planting of the Gospel, and the Primitive Christians and Martyrs in following Times did the same; and 'tis what by Example and Precept they stirr'd up all to do, namely, to do all things to the Praise and Glory of God. So that this was done in and from the Beginning; and the Example of our Forefathers herein is here set as our Pattern and Precedent, for we are to say, *Glory be to God in the highest, as it was in the Beginning.*

(2.) What is said to be thus in the Beginning, is farther said to be now; as it was in the Beginning *is now*: the present time affording us Instances of this devout Practice, as well as the past. The departed Saints that are gone to Heaven, are now singing their Praises and Hallelujahs there to the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity; and all



pious Christians that continue on Earth, are still doing the same; heres; And as this ever hath been from the Beginning, and is now; so is it affirm'd, *It giving to us* (32) *That We ever shall be World without end.* God Almighty hath taken that care of his Honour, that there never shall be wanting some to sound forth his Praises, and to give him the Glory that is due unto his Name; of this the Psalmist frequently assures us, saying, *Psalm 145: One Generation shall praise thy Works unto another, and declare thy Power* &c. *for he says he) I will be talking of thy Works, thy Glory and wonderful Works; so that other Men shall speak of the Might of thy marvellous Acts; and I will also tell of thy Greatness; so that the Memorial of thine abundant Kindness shall be shewed, and Men shall sing of thy Righteousness: Ver. 4, 5, 6.* And because this short World will have an end, and the Praises thereof cease, therefore there is another World after this without end, where they will continue forever without ceasing.

This is the Sense of this Doxology, which the Church so often mingles with her Prayers to quicken and enflame our Devotion. But, of another Doxology here is to be

There are two Objections against this Divine Hymn, which must be a little spoken to and remov'd. The one against the use of it at all, and the other against the so frequent use of it.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Objection, That this Hymn of *Gloria Patri*, 1800 was compos'd against the Heresy of *Arian* and his Followers, who denied the Divinity of Christ, and the Equality of the Three Persons, which then prevail'd much in the World; but now that Fire being quenched, and that detestable Opinion exploded, there is no need of any farther use of it in the Church. In answer to this, I say, That 'twere well, if this ancient Heresy were so bury'd, as never to rise or revive any more. But alas! that Weed was never so thoroughly rooted out, but the Seeds of it soon sprang up again, to the depraving of the Doctrine, and disturbing the Peace of the Church. In these later Years there hath risen up one *Socinus*, a Man of a subtle and crafty Wit, who hath rubb'd up, and reviv'd the same Heresy, by denying the Divinity and Satisfaction of our Blessed Saviour, and hath carried away many by his cunning and corrupt Reasoning.

Beside which, there are Swarms of Deists and Sensualists in our days, who embrace the same detestable Opinion,

and daily endeavour to make Profelytes to it: so that the Poison of this Heresy, by these means spreading among us, there is still need of the same Antidotes and Preservatives against it: for which, among other Reasons, the Church hath wisely continued the use of this and other devout Hymns, to preserve the antient Catholick Faith in this Point. Again, 2dly, There are others, who like well enough the use of this Hymn, but dislike the so frequent Repetition of it in Divine Services: they think it needless to affix it at the end of every Psalm, and to use it so often upon other Occasions, and would have it more seldom and sparingly recited.

But these Men betray a too great Coldness and Lukewarmness in these heavenly Matters, and shew a want of a due Sense of, and Zeal for the Glory of God: for which good Men have thought they could never say or do enough. David would have us say always, *The Lord be praised*, and the Apostle, *In every thing give Thanks*: for which reason the Church hath ever thought fit to mingle their Devotion with words of Praise, and upon the mention of every Blessing and Mercy, to say, *Glory be to God*. And is this Sacred Hymn of Glory, than which nothing doth sound more Heavenly in the Ears of faithful Men, to be now reckon'd a Superfluity, which must be par'd away, lest we cloy God with too much Service? Is our Faith in the Holy Trinity, for which the Fathers so earnestly contended, become a matter needless to be mention'd or repeated in our publick Prayers? Hath the Church in all Ages, in Discourses concerning God, tack'd words of Honour and Glory to that Trinity which we adore, and is the concluding the Psalms with it now become an Eye-sore, or a galling of the Ears that hear it? How can we too often repeat that which we are daily to meditate and rely upon? Sure the Mercies of God are more frequent than our Praises can be, and we must be very cold and indifferent as to the Honour of God, to reckon the repeating of his Praises to be a vain Repetition.

Wherefore to draw to a Conclusion, let us continue the devout use of this Divine Doxology; saying, as we are here directed, *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*; not withholding our Worship from either of the Persons, but jointly adoring them all. This is the Song of the Seraphims, who cease not Day and

Night to cry, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.* And this was the Song of the Angels at our Saviour's Birth, who brake forth into this Hymn, of *Glory be to God in the highest.* And what better Form can we have of glorifying God here on Earth, than that by which the Angels do it in Heaven? Let us then keep to the Belief and frequent Use of it, as the Church directs, saying it not by rote, out of custom, or for fashion-sake, but with pious and devout Affections. When the *Gloria Patri* is in our Mouths, let the Praises of God be in our Hearts; so shall we be prepar'd to join with the heavenly Quire above, and our present faint praising of him be e'er long advanc'd into incessant Hallelujahs: which God grant for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.



## DISCOURSE XXVII.

PSALM CXIII. 1. the first part.

*Praise ye the Lord.*

Together with PSALM LXX. 4. the last part.

*The Lord be praised.*

**A**FTER the Hymn of *Glory be to the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost*, follows that which was called the Hallelujah, in *English* the same with, *Praise ye the Lord*: this was first spoken by the Priest, and after answer'd by the People, saying, *The Lord's Name be praised.* Nothing (saith St. *Austin*) sounding more grateful in the Ears of pious Christians, than the praising of God, and a continual Hallelujah. 'Tis fitly plac'd immediately after the *Gloria Patri*, to signify that tho we acknowledg three Persons in the Trinity, yet we worship the Unity, and adore only one God. And 'tis put just before the saying or singing of the Psalms, as a Preface or Introduction to them; Praise being the Subject-matter of all or most of them; call'd therefore *Sepher Tehillim*, the Book of Praises.

This



This Song of Hallelujah is by St. John said to be the Voice of Heaven, where 'tis continually sounded forth by the Angels and glorify'd Spirits, as we read *Rev. 19. 4, 5, 6*. And the Church hath made it a part of our Liturgy, to begin it here, that we may be the better fitted to bear a part in it for ever hereafter. Accordingly, 'tis found in all the antient Liturgies of the Church, by the old Name in *Hebrew* of Hallelujah, which in ours is render'd in the *English* Tongue, by *Praise ye the Lord*; by the daily use whereof we tread in the steps of primitive and venerable Antiquity, which delighted in nothing more than in calling upon one another to praise the Lord. In treating then of these Words, we shall consider,

I. The Minister's part, in these words, *Praise ye the Lord*. And,

II. The People's part, in these, *The Lord's Name be praised*. Both which are to join in praising God; the one by calling upon, the other by consenting to it: wherein each have their Share, to increase and heighten their Devotion. To begin,

I. With the Minister's part, that consists in calling upon others to praise God, saying, *Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord*. This holds forth to us the Duty of God's Ministers, which is to excite and call upon the People to praise the Lord. We are all but too backward to this Duty; and tho we are forward enough to worldly Mirth and Jollity, yet few have that relish they ought to have of spiritual Joy and Rejoicing in God. There are too many who are more apt to blaspheme, than to bless the Name of God; and are wont to mention it oftner in their Oaths and Curses, than in their Prayers and Praises. 'Tis obvious to observe the too great Backwardness there is in some to the holy Exercises of Religion, how few are so readily inclin'd as they should be to glorify their Maker, and to render him the Praises due unto him; yea, the best need many a Call and Admonition to this purpose. And therefore to quicken us in this Service, our Church, in compliance with Antiquity, frequently stirs up our Devotion by way of Remembrance: the Minister is appointed to be our Monitor, to put us upon uttering and sounding forth the Praises of God; calling upon us in the words of our Text, *Praise ye the Lord*.

But what is it, to praise the Lord? Why! In general, it is to worship him, and to give him a Service peculiar to him, and paramount to all other things; 'tis to adore his Greatness; to admire his Wisdom, to exalt his Power, to sing of his Righteousness; to celebrate his Goodness; and, in a word, to extol all his transcendent Excellencies and Perfections.

Neither doth this praising God rest in the mere Speculation or idle Contemplation of the Divine Excellencies, floating only in the Brain, or gliding upon the Tongue; but in such quick and lively apprehensions of them, as sink down into the Heart, and there beget Affections suitable to them: for 'twill make us love him for his Goodness, respect him for his Greatness, fear him for his Justice, dread him for his Power, adore him for his Wisdom, and for all his Attributes make us live in a constant Awe and Obedience to him. This is to praise God; without which all other courting and complimenting of him is but mere Flattery and Hypocrisy.

But how are we thus to praise the Lord? Why! this must be done,

1<sup>st</sup>. By the Mind, to shew the Sincerity of it. And,  
2<sup>ly</sup>. By the Mouth, to shew the Solemnity of it. *W. J.*  
1<sup>st</sup>. To praise God with the Mind, is to have high and honourable Thoughts of him, and to bear an inward Esteem and Reverence in our Hearts towards him; to entertain Conceptions worthy of him, suitable to the Perfection of his Nature, the Dignity of his State, and the Excellency of all his Works: in a word, 'tis to think him to be, as indeed he is, infinitely wise, just and good, and to demean our selves towards him accordingly. This is the Life and Soul of Honour, which is seated within, and consists in due Sentiments of the Divine Majesty imprinted upon the Mind: where these are wanting, there is nothing but the colour or carcase, not the life or substance of true Praise. *To draw nigh to God with the Lips, when the Heart is far from him, is no better than Mockery and Dissimulation, and is rather affronting than adoring of him: and therefore the Psalmist often calls upon his Soul, in these words, Praise thou the Lord; O my Soul; and all that is within me, praise his holy Name.*  
2<sup>ly</sup>. We are call'd upon to praise God not only with our Mind, but with our Mouth; that is, by publishing of his Honour, and sounding forth his Praises. This we find

David



David did throughout the whole Book of Psalms, and calls upon others every where to do the same: O God (saith he) *my Heart is ready*; and then doubles it again, *My Heart is ready, I will sing and give Praise with the best Member that I have*; that is, with the Tongue, which is still'd the Glory of Man, by the vocal Praises whereof he excels all other Creatures. And this the Apostle would have done not only with the Mind and the Mouth, but with one Mind and one Mouth, to signify the Unity and good Agreement of Christians, in celebrating the Glory of their Maker; Rom. 15. 6. *That ye may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Where he wills us to join together in the same Forms of praying to and praising God, that by the Harmony of Hearts and Voices we may make the sweeter melody in the Ears of Heaven. In short, both the inward and outward Man, the Soul with all its Faculties, the Understanding, Will and Affections; the Body with all its Members, the Head, the Heart, the Tongue and the Hand, are all to be employ'd in his Service, and become the Instruments of setting forth his Praise: which is, according to the Apostle's Advice, to *glorify God with our Souls and Bodies, which are both his.*

But besides these general Rules, there are other more particular ways of praising God, to which we are here call'd.

As, 1. By daily owning him for our Maker and Preserver, and thereby acknowledging our entire Dependence upon him. This is the least piece of Homage we can pay to Almighty God, who *giveth us Life, and Breath, and all things*; and 'tis but reasonable we should use our Breath in praising of him that gave it. *It is he that hath made us* (saith the Psalmist) *and not we our selves, we are his People and the Sheep of his Pasture*, Psal. 100. 3. and therefore he calls us to *worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker*, Psal. 95. 6. Every Benefit we receive lays upon us a Debt of Gratitude; and since God renews his Blessings upon us every day, we stand oblig'd to return him a daily Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving: and he that *hath offereth me Thanks and Praises, he honoureth me*, saith God, Psal. 50. ult.

2. To praise God, is to render unto him the Glory of all his Works, by observing his Hand in all that befalls us, and ascribing all things to his Wisdom and Power.

We



We rob God of his Honour, by assuming any part of it to our selves; and all that we impute to our own Merits and Industry, is so much taken from him, to whom all of it is due. Hence we find *David*, that great Master of Thanksgiving, frequently magnifying God after this manner, giving him the Glory of all that he had or could do, extolling his Goodness to the Heavens, and his Faithfulness to the Clouds.

3. To praise God, is to endeavour to resemble and become like unto him. He that admires another, will seek to imitate him, and labour after the greatest Likeness and Conformity to him; he will set him before him as his Pattern, and be ever transcribing the Copy of his Perfections. If we truly love and honour God, we shall covet the nearest likeness and resemblance of him, endeavouring to be *holy as he is holy*, and *merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful*. This is one of the noblest ways we have of setting forth his Praise; which consists not so much in the Flatteries of the Tongue, or in giving him many good Words and lofty Titles, as in an inward Delight in him, and a pious Imitation of his Divine Perfections. By this we acknowledg our own great Defects, and shew our selves ravish'd with the love and admiration of his transcendent Excellencies. When God Almighty appears so great in our eyes, and all other things so little, that we desire nothing more than to be like him in Righteousness and true Holiness; when we endeavour to imitate him in Justice, Charity and Goodness, and to be in some measure Partakers of the Divine Nature: in a word, when we behold the infinite Loveliness of his Image, so as to be transform'd into the same Image from Glory to Glory; then do we praise and glorify God indeed, and declare plainly, that we prefer him before and above all things.

Lastly, To praise the Lord, is to delight in his Presence, and to long for a more immediate Fruition of his glorious Godhead. He that highly values or honours any Person, will be still coveting his Company; and we commonly take a pleasure in the sight and presence of an admir'd Object: The like effect shall we feel within us towards God, if our Hearts are inwardly touch'd with a sense and desire of his Glory; we shall delight in a spiritual Converse and Communion with him here, and long for the joyful Vision and Enjoyment of him hereafter; saying with holy

*David,*

David, O when shall I come and appear in the Presence of the Lord? my Soul is athirst for God; as the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God: Psal. 42. 1, 2.

Thus we see the Manner and Effects of praising God, to which we are here invited by the words of our Text and Liturgy; the first thing to be spoken to from them, viz. The Minister's Call to the People, saying, *Praise ye the Lord.*

The next is, The People's Answer, or Return to it, in these words, *The Lord's Name be praised.* Where they give their full Assent and Consent to the Equity and Reasonableness of the Duty, and declare their Willingness and Readiness to observe it; saying, with the Church in the Revelation, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Honour, and Praise, and Glory; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* This is the Hallelujah, or *Praise ye the Lord*, that is still sounding in Heaven, and is in some measure imitated here on Earth by our sounding back, *The Lord's Name be praised.*

The Name of God is in Scripture set to signify all things whereby he is pleas'd to make himself known to us, and to distinguish himself from all other things; and so his Word and his Works will come under his Name: for as a Man is known from others by his Name, so is God Almighty discover'd and distinguish'd by his Word and Works; both which are therefore to be prais'd and honour'd by us, by speaking and thinking worthily of them, and making them the Subject of our frequent Study and Meditation. Again,

The Name of God is sometimes set to signify all things that are related to him, and denominated by him. Thus his Ministers, his Sabbath, his Sanctuary, and the like, are compriz'd under his Name; which therefore require Honour and Respect to be paid to them, for the relation they bear to God, and their being call'd by his Name: *Thou shalt hallow my Sabbath* (saith he) *and reverence my Sanctuary*, and have those in high estimation *that labour in the Word and Doctrine.*

But the Name of God here is chiefly meant of the Person, the Titles, and Perfections of the Divine Majesty; which not only deserve, but call for our highest Praises and most profound Veneration. He is indeed infinitely excellent

cellent beyond what we can conceive or express: *His Name is exalted far above all Blessing and Praise, and his Glory is above Heaven and Earth.* All that we can do, is to make honourable mention of his Name, to bow before him, and never to speak or think of him, or any of his Attributes, without the greatest Reverence and Adoration; saying upon all occasions, with the devout Psalmist, *O Lord, our Governour, how excellent is thy Name in all the world!* This is the Sense of what we say in these words, *The Lord's Name be praised.*

All that remains, is, to exhort you to so reasonable, so excellent, and so divine a Duty; not only to *say always, the Lord be praised,* but likewise to act for his Praise, and to do all things to his Honour and Glory: which we are abundantly encourag'd to do,

(1.) Because God Almighty endow'd us with higher and nobler Faculties than other Creatures; for this end, that we should set forth his Praise: for the other things were made to administer the Matter and Occasion, yet Man alone was design'd and qualify'd to exercise the Act of glorifying God. Let us not then frustrate our Maker in the End of our Creation, by depriving him of the Honour that is due unto his Name: much less let us thwart and contradict his Design herein, by living to his dishonour. To prevent which, let us know,

(2.) That the praising and honouring of God is in it self a most honourable Employment; 'tis the work of Heaven, and the business of Saints and Angels there to be always singing Praises to him that *sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for evermore.* And how can we be better employ'd here on Earth, than by doing the Will of God as it is done in Heaven? 'Tis, we know, the Credit of a Servant to bring Credit to his Master; and 'tis the Honour of a Subject to promote the Honour of his Prince: But both these fall infinitely short of the Glory and Renown of a good Christian, in bringing and spreading the Glory of his Maker.

(3.) To praise God, is a pleasant and delightful Duty; 'tis frequently express'd in the Psalms by singing, which we know is accompany'd with joy and delight. 'Tis a pleasant thing to give thanks unto the Lord (saith holy David) yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful. An ingenuous Mind delights in making some Return for Benefits; and



and since all that we have is receiv'd at God's hands, it will be no small reviving to our Spirits to make some possible requital. This put the Royal Psalmist upon that frequent question, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits?* And because he could render nothing but Praise and Thanksgiving, which was all that was expected from him, it was pleasant to him to render so easy and acceptable Tribute. And so it will be with us, if we are duly affected with his Honour.

Lastly, To praise God in the way before describ'd, will be highly profitable and beneficial to our selves; for God hath declar'd, that *them that honour him, he will honour,* 1 Sam. 2. 30. And this he doth partly in this Life, but chiefly in the next.

He honours them here in this Life, by putting them upon the most honourable Service, viz. the Attendance upon his Worship and Glory, which far exceeds all Attendance upon any Prince or Potentate upon earth. Again,

He honours them here, by taking them into the nearest Relations to himself, adopting them into his Family, and making them his Friends and Favourites, which is a Privilege higher and nobler than any that this World can afford. Moreover,

He honours them here, by causing others to honour them, and to that end he hath inspirited such a Beauty and Majesty upon Virtue and Goodness, as commands the universal Love and Veneration of Mankind, and extorts Honour and Commendation from the work of Men. But the greatest and most excellent Honour is reserved for them in the Life to come, where is laid up for them a Crown of Righteousness, and an eternal Light of Glory.

In short, God Almighty hath so closely twisted his own Glory and our Happiness together, that at the same time we advance the one, we promote the other. He hath made our very Work to become our Wages, and the keeping his Commandments carries with it its own Reward: for in glorifying God, we advance our own Glory, and we cannot better serve our selves, than by serving and adoring our great Creator.

To conclude then, Let us all make it our Business and Delight to be always setting forth the Praises of God, celebrating his Goodness with the Voice of Thanksgiving; and to the Hallelujahs, or Praise ye the Lord, founder of Love, adding our part, and saying, *The Lord's Name be praised.*

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## DISCOURSE XXVIII.

### PSALM XCV. 1, 2, &c.

*O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the Strength of our Salvation: Let us come before his Presence with Thanksgiving, and shew our selves glad in him with Psalms: For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods, &c.*

**O**UR Church having prepar'd our way to the praising of God, by pious Ejaculations, Hymns, and Hallelujahs; it here enters us upon the Duty by this invitatory Psalm of *David*, wherein both Minister and People mutually invite and call upon each other to sing the Praises and to hear the Voice of the Lord; and that not only with a suitable Joy and Cheerfulness, but likewise with a Lowliness and Reverence becoming our Addresses to the Divine Majesty. This Psalm is a Psalm of Thanksgiving, compos'd and us'd by *David* upon great and solemn Occasions, and contains many lofty Strains of Joy and Rejoicing in God: For which reason it hath been taken into all the antient Liturgies of the Church; and is made a part of our daily Service.

The Psalm consists of a threefold Exhortation; the

*First*, To the Duty of Praising God, from the first to the sixth Verse. The

*Second*, To the Duty of Praying to him, from the sixth to the eighth Verse. The

*Third*, To the Duty of Hearing God's Word, from the eighth Verse to the end. Each of which will require our particular Consideration. And,

*First*, It begins with an earnest Exhortation to the great Duty of Praising God: Ver. 1, 2. *O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the Strength of our Sal-*

*vation,*

variation, saith the Minister. To which the People reply, *Let us come before his Presence with Thanksgiving, and shew our selves glad in him with Psalms.* Such is the natural Sluggishness of our Hearts to these holy Duties, that the most powerful Exhortations are all little enough to awaken them; and without a frequent Remembrancer, they would fall into an utter Forgetfulness of all God's Mercies. And therefore the Psalmist here calls upon us with this rousing Exhortation, *O come let us sing unto the Lord:* And the Apostle to the same purpose wills us, to *admonish one another in Psalms, Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing and making melody in your Hearts unto God;* Col. 3. 16. Where he seems to quicken our Backwardness, and to stir us up to a due Sense of the Divine Favour and Goodness. And this is to be done, both outwardly with the Voice, by singing unto the Lord; and inwardly with the Heart, by heartily rejoicing in God, who is the Strength of our Salvation: 'Tis by his Power that our Salvation is effected, and upon his Mercy alone all our Hopes of it are founded; and therefore both our Heart and Tongue are to become the Instruments of his Praise.

Neither is this to be done only privately and singly by our selves alone, which is sometimes a Duty to be perform'd in secret by us, but also more publickly with others, which is likewise justly requir'd and expected of us: for God is greatly to be fear'd in the Assemblies of his Saints, and to be had in reverence of all that draw nigh unto him. And therefore we find David often declaring, *My Praise shall be of thee in the great Congregation, my Vows will I perform in the sight of them that fear thee;* Psal. 22. 25. And Psal. 35. 18. *I will give thee thanks in the great Congregation, I will praise thee among much People.* For God is more especially present in the publick Assemblies of his Saints, where he hath promis'd to meet and bless us; there we most solemnly declare his Righteousness, and by the joint Harmony of Heart and Voice make his Praise to be glorious. And this is what the Psalmist here calls upon us to do, in these words, *Let us come before his Presence with Thanksgiving, and shew our selves glad in him with Psalms.* Which weighty Duty he backs with two or three strong Arguments and Inducements.

The first whereof is taken from the super-eminent Greatness and Supremacy of God above all other things; for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods, ver. 3.



A great God he is indeed, yea, too great for us to conceive or comprehend him. He is Immense and Omnipresent, not confin'd, as all other things are, to Time or Place; but his Greatness is every where, and he filleth Heaven and Earth with his Presence. Moreover, *He is stil'd a great King above all Gods*; that is, he is a King above all the Kings and Potentates of the Earth; who are in Scripture call'd Gods, because they have something of the Image of God deriv'd upon them, and they reign by his Permission and Authority.

But still God is far above them, they being all sent by and subject to him; they act by his Commission, and are accountable to him for the Use or Abuse of their Authority; and so must be much inferior to him.

And as he is above all, that by virtue of a Commission are call'd God, so is he much more above all, that by a Mistake are only thought so; that is, he is above all the idol and false Gods of the Heathen, in whom there is no Help, nor have they any Strength against him. And tho the Angels, for their higher and nobler Perfections above other Creatures, are sometimes call'd Gods, yet are they but the Officers of God's Kingdom, and the Executors of his Will; they own their Duty to their Master, and pay their humble Adorations to the Most High. And if these, who are all his Creatures and Servants, have some Honour paid to them for the relation they bear to God, how much more are we oblig'd to set forth the Praises of him, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Another Argument here arg'd for the praising of God, is taken from the infinite Largeness of his Power and Knowledge. *In his hand are all the Corners of the Earth, and the Strength of the Hills is his also*; ver. 4. All the Parts of the Universe, from the highest to the lowest, are in his hand; that is, in his power, and under his command; and all things in them are at his disposal. The most secret Corners of the Earth, into which no mortal Eye can search, are all open to his Inspection; and the highest Tops of Mountains, which are inaccessible to human Powers, are all within the reach of his hand. He made them all, and they are all subject to his Dominion. *He that made the Eye* (saith the Psalmist) *shall he not see?* *He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall he not be know?* And he that made the Hand, *shall he not be punish?*

The most secret Counsels and Contrivances of the Wicked, set forth here by the Corners of the Earth, because they are commonly hatch'd in Corners, are all in his view, and in his hand to prosper or disappoint them: And the open Force and Power of Men in high places, represented by the *Strength of the Hills*, is his also. His Power extends to the uttermost parts and corners of the Earth, where no People inhabit, and where no Prince's Arms can come. The poorest and meanest of God's Creatures, whom some think represented by the Valleys and *Corners of the Earth*, are under his notice and care; and the greatest and richest Persons, set forth by the *Strength of the Hills*, are not out of his power. In a word, he ruleth and ordereth all things according to his own Will and Pleasure, and therefore they are all to found forth his Praises.

And as the Land and all things in it, so the Sea also is his, for he made it, and his Hands prepared the dry Land; ver. 5. The Sea and Land are in Scripture set to signify the whole World, they being the two principal parts of it; and both being the Works of God's hand, are by right of Creation both his: *The Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulness thereof.* And so is the great and wide Sea also, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great Beasts; *there go the Ships*, to preserve Commerce with distant Nations, and *there is that Leviathan which he made to take his pastime therein.* 'Tis God that form'd and fashion'd these things, and preserves them all in their due order. He divideth the Sea thro his power, and maketh it ebb and flow at his pleasure. He setteth bounds to the Ocean, that it cannot pass, and restrains that unruly Element by a Girdle of Sand. He checketh the proud Waves thereof, saying, *Hitherto shall ye come, and no farther.* And so his Hand, by keeping them from overflowing the Earth, prepared the dry Land, and made it a Habitation for the Sons of Men. In short, the Earth is full of the Loving-kindness of the Lord, and the Sea abounds with his Wonders in the deep. The Consideration of which things should fill our Hearts with Joy, and our Mouths with the Praises of our Maker; rendring him that Tribute of Thankfulness that is due to him. And whereas all other Creatures are the silent Orators of his Glory, we to whom he hath given a Tongue to speak, should daily use it in singing forth his Praise. Which is the first part of this Psalm, viz. an Exhortation to praising God.

The *Second* is, an Exhortation to Praying to him : For the Psalmist, upon the foregoing Arguments and Considerations, breaks out into these following words : *O come let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker* ; ver. 6. There is a peculiar Worship or Homage due to the Supreme Being, upon the account of his being our Maker and Preserver ; for he that made and form'd us, may justly claim our greatest Service : and 'tis highly fit and reasonable, that we should frequently address to and acknowledg that Divine Majesty, from whom we receive our Being, and all that we have, are, or can do. And this is done by our daily worshipping and praying to him, and owning our continual Dependence upon him. Which things the Psalmist wills us to do with the lowliest postures of Reverence and Adoration ; for he calls upon us to *fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker*.

As for falling down or prostration of the Body, which was antiently a Ceremony of the greatest Respect, that is now out of use, and under no command ; but standing, bowing, and kneeling, are still requir'd as signs of Honour and Reverence : and since we pay these to Princes and other Superiours, who are but mortal Creatures like our selves ; how much more ought we to pay them unto God, who is infinitely above all the Princes and Powers upon earth ? Wherefore let us not think it much to bow our Bodies in the House of God, or to bend our Knees to the Lord of Heaven and Earth ; especially considering that both Christ and his Apostles have by their Precepts and Examples taught us so to do, and all good Men in all Ages have ever done the same. 'Tis a great mistake in some Persons, that God looks only to the Heart, and hath no regard to the outward Gestures of the Body, which hath occasion'd great Rudeness and Unmannerliness in his Service ; whereas God, who made both Soul and Body, expects the Reverence of each, and will be glorify'd in both. We see the Psalmist here calls for it, and the Apostle commands all things in Heaven and Earth to bow and bend the knee before him. And if the antient Fathers blamed some for standing at their Prayers, which was a sign of some Reverence, what would they have said to see Men sitting at them, which hath not the least show of any ?

Let us then call upon one another, to worship and kneel down, not to Idols or Images, which are the Works of  
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Mens hands; but to *the Lord our Maker*, who hath all Wisdom to know, and all Power to relieve our Wants: which is the first and great Motive to worship and put up our Petitions to him, because he is our Maker. But because this is common to us with the Heathen World, God being the Maker of us all; the Psalmist in the next words adds another and better Motive to us, taken from a nearer Relation that God stands in to us: *For he is the Lord our God, and we are the People of his pasture, and the Sheep of his hand*; ver. 7. And therefore a more especial Obligation lies upon us, above all Mankind, to worship and pray unto him. He is more particularly *the Lord our God* in Covenant with us, by which we are more peculiarly his People: He hath adopted us into his Family, and enter'd into a mutual League and Covenant with us, whereby he is become our God, and we his People; he takes us for his Flock, and provides for us as the *People of his pasture, and the Sheep of his hand*. *The Lord is my Shepherd* (saith holy David) *therefore I can lack nothing; he shall feed me in a green Pasture, and lead me forth beside the Waters of Comfort*: Psal. 23. 1, 2. He undertakes to lead and keep us as his Sheep, feeding us in his Pasture, and defending us with his Hand; and we are surely safe under his protection; which is a farther Encouragement not only to praise him for past Benefits, but to pray to him for future Blessings, with an Assurance of finding Grace and Mercy to help in time of need. This is the second Part of this Psalm of Thanksgiving, which exhorts us to add Praying to our Praising of God. There remains yet

A Third Part, containing an Exhortation to the Hearing of God's Word; ver. 8, 9. *To day if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts, &c.* In the foregoing parts of the Psalm, David calls upon us to praise God, and to pray unto him; in this latter part, he brings in God Almighty calling upon us to hear his Voice, if we expect he should hear our Petitions: and therefore 'tis express'd conditionally, *If you will hear his Voice*, he will hear yours, to preserve you from hardening your Heart, and prevent the Evils that have fallen upon others for neglecting to hear him. So that the Words are an Admonition to us to become diligent Hearers and Doers of God's Word, that we may be blessed in the deed. And this we are here exhorted to do presently without delay; *To day if you will hear his*  
 Vol. I. Q 2 Voice,

*Voice, &c. To day is all that we can call ours, or be assur'd of; to morrow is uncertain, and may never happen to us. Delays in this, as in all cases, are very dangerous, and may deprive us of all other Opportunities of doing it; and therefore it concerns us not to defer it, but to embrace the present time; and now whilst it's call'd to day, to hearken unto his Voice, lest we hear of it no more. Jerusalem had a Day, when it might have heard, and known the things that belong'd to its peace; but by omitting and putting it off, they were for ever hid from its eyes. Because Christ's passionate Call and Intreaty could not melt their Hearts into a Compliance, their obstinate Refusal melted him into Tears for the Miseries that were coming upon them: for when he beheld the City, he wept over it, saying, O that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

God Almighty never speaks to us, but for our good; he renders our Happiness, and seeks to prevent our Ruin by all the Instructions deliver'd to us: it must therefore be our Wisdom and Interest, as well as Duty, to hearken to them; and that too out of hand, for now is the appointed Time, now is the Day of Salvation. If we will hear his Voice, it must be to day, whilst he may be found; to morrow may be too late, when his Ears and the Door of Mercy may be shut against us: which should teach us to close with the present Season, and now whilst 'tis call'd to day to hear him speaking to us in his Holy Word.

This Lesson the Psalmist backs in the next words with a Caution against a dangerous Effect of neglecting or delaying of it; and that is, Hardness of Heart: *To day if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts*; implying, that the turning the deaf Ear to God's Word will certainly harden the Heart: for 'twill cause God to withdraw his Grace, and the Influence of his Holy Spirit; and then the Heart will naturally become hard and insensible, as Water heated by the Fire, when remov'd from it naturally becomes cold. The Word of God is sometimes compar'd to Fire, that melts us into Sorrow; sometimes to a Hammer, that breaks an obdurate Heart into Contrition; and sometimes to the Voice of a Charmer, that mollifies it into Softness and Compliance. But when we reject the wisest Instructions of God's Word, and with the deaf Adder refuse to hear the most charming Notes of it, then do we return to an evil Heart of Unbelief, that makes us to depart from  
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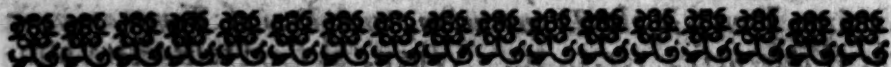
the living God, and not to desire the Knowledge of his ways; by which means the Impressions of Good and Evil wear off by degrees, and the Heart becomes so brawny and callous, as not to fear the Threats, or believe the Promises of God.

A sad Instance of this, the Psalmist gives us in the unbelieving Jews, *in the Provocation, and Day of Temptation in the Wilderness*; ver. 9, 10. When, as God tells them himself, *your Fathers tempted me, prov'd me, and saw my Works*: meaning, that tho he had in a wonderful manner brought them out of the Bondage of Egypt, and led them by Miracles in the way to Canaan; tho he gave them Bread and Manna from Heaven in the Wilderness, and fed them with Angels Food; yet did they still provoke him by their ingratitude and Infidelity. Tho they receiv'd daily Instances of his Care and Providence over them, yet were they still murmuring and complaining, and ask'd Meat for their Lusts. Yea, tho he bore with them a long time, and would not suffer his whole Displeasure to arise; yet they still provok'd him more and more, seeking new ways to try his Patience, and prove his Fidelity to them: *Forty years long* (saith he) *was I griev'd with this Generation.* And after so long Trial and Forbearance of them, he was with trouble and indignation forc'd to say of them, that they are a *People that do err in their Hearts, and have not known my ways*: they wilfully departed from me, and perverted their ways; so that being weary'd with their Iniquities, *I swore unto them in my wrath, that they should not enter into my Rest.* Which thing happen'd unto them, for they most of them perish'd in the Desert, and never came to the Land of Canaan. These doleful Disasters beset the Jews for their Obstinacy and Unbelief, and are recorded for our learning, upon whom the Ends of the World are come. David set this sad Example of Divine Vengeance before the Men of his time, and St. Paul did the same in his days. And our Church daily sets it before us in the publick Devotion, to be a warning to us not to tread in the steps of their Unbelief, lest we follow them too in their miserable End.

This is the Sum: of this Psalm of Thanksgiving, wherein we are exhorted to praise God for all his Mercies, and to pray unto him for the Supply of all our Wants, and to hearken to him for direction in the whole Course of our



Lives; the doing whereof will lead to everlasting Felicity, and the neglect of it to endless Perdition. Let us all then make it our great Care to obtain the one, and to escape the other : which God grant, &c.



## DISCOURSE XXIX.

EPHES. V. 19, 20.

*Speaking to your selves in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs; singing and making melody in your Heart to the Lord: Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**A**FTER a gracious and solemn Invitation to Prayer, Praises, and Hearing of God's Word, in the foregoing Psalm; there follows in the publick Service the saying or singing of the Psalms, in order as they are appointed; which are to be read over every month, and at the end of each Psalm the *Gloria Patri* to be repeated.

These Psalms being too many, and too long to be particularly handled, and being for the most part plain and easy to be understood; I shall here only treat of them in general, from these words of the Apostle, *Speaking to your selves in Psalms, Hymns, and spiritual Songs; singing and making melody in your Heart to the Lord, &c.*

Where *speaking to your selves*, is thought to imply an alternate way of saying or singing these Psalms, each having their parts, and so speaking to and taking it from one another by turns, the Priest saying one Verse, and the People another; or as it is in Choirs, one side saying one Verse, and the other side another, according to the ancient practice of the Greek and Latin Churches, as 'tis related by *Socrates*, *Theodoret*, and *St. Basil*. But we have a higher Pattern for this Practice, namely, the Angels, the Seraphims, and heavenly Host, who *sing one to another, Holy, Holy, Holy*; as we read, *Isa. 6. 3*. From which heavenly Pattern, the primitive Christians were wont (as *Pliny* tells us)

us) to sing their Hymns *secum invicem*, alternately and in parts, to stir up each other's Affections: thus speaking to one another (as the Apostle here directs us) in Psalms, Hymns, and spiritual Songs, &c.

I shall not here nicely enquire into the Difference between these, tho some Criticks distinguish Psalms, Hymns, and spiritual Songs from one another, by the Measure and Manner of their Composure; but shall understand them of all sorts of Divine and Heavenly Songs or Anthems, compos'd to set forth the Glory of God, and to celebrate his Praise, with which the Psalms of David abound.

With these we are here bid to sing and make melody in our Hearts unto the Lord. Where we see, that Singing is so far from being forbidden in the Service of God, as some vainly object, that 'tis requir'd of all Christians, to raise their Affections, and excite their Devotion. Neither doth the making Melody in the Heart, exclude the Melody of the Voice, but rather include it, as a means of elevating the Heart unto God; the one being assisted and advanc'd by the other, and both together making a sweet and melodious Harmony in the Ears of Heaven. To which

The Apostle here adds, the giving thanks always to God the Father, in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Which may sufficiently warrant the affixing of *Gloria Patri* to the end of every Psalm. And this our Church hath directed and enjoind us to do, in the daily use of David's Psalms; concerning which, I shall speak something of the Authority, the Antiquity, the Excellency, the Usefulness, and the Variety of them; and conclude with the right way and manner of reading and using them. And,

1<sup>st</sup>, For the Authority of these Psalms, tho David and others are said to be the immediate Authors of them, being ascrib'd to them, and bearing their Names; yet the Authority of them is to be deriv'd much higher: for they are divine Prayers and Praises inspir'd into them by God, and indicted by his Holy Spirit. For as all Scripture is said to be given by Inspiration of God, so this devout Collection of Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, may be justly thought to be a divine Composure. And as in all other parts of Sacred Writ, holy Men spake as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost; so had the Penmen of these Psalms a more especial Impulse and Incitation of the Divine Spirit, in composing such lofty and heavenly Strains of Praise,

in honour to our Maker : which may therefore justly recommend them to our frequent Use and Study.

2dly, For the Antiquity of these Psalms, they are as antient as *Moses* and *David*, and had their place in the *Jewish* Liturgy; the greatest part of the Temple-Service consisting in the Psalms of *David*, which were committed to the Masters of Musick, to be set and sung for the praising God in their publick Assemblies. So we read, *2 Chron. 29. 30. that Hezekiah and the Princes commanded the Levites to sing Praises unto the Lord in the words of David and Asaph the Seer; and they sang Praises with gladness, and bow'd their heads and worship'd.* From thence the same Practice came down to the Christian Churches, which have used these Psalms in their publick Service ever since. We find *Ignatius* used them in the Church of *Antioch*, *St. Ambrose* in *Milan*, *St. Basil* and the other Fathers did the same in their several Churches: which Practice obtains with us to this day. And tho many Differences have risen among several Parties that are call'd Christians, yet they all agree in these antient Forms of Prayer and Praises; which should keep us firm and steddy in the use of them.

3dly, The incomparable Excellency, as well as the universal Approbation of these divine Psalms, may farther raise our Esteem, and recommend to us the Use of them. And here it would be endless, as well as needless, to reckon up the many Eulogies and honourable Characters that have been given of them. The Fathers frequently stile them, *The Marrow of Divinity, the Storehouse of Devotion, the Instrument of Vertue, and a brief Compendium of the Holy Scriptures.* *Luther* calls them *the Lesser Bible*: And others, *A Treasury of Blessings and Praises, a Breviat of the Heavenly Choir, and the Quintessence of all Religion.* Indeed, 'tis hard to speak too great things of these divine Hymns, or to exceed in our Expressions or Admirations of them: for if Praise be the highest and most delightful Duty we can pay to our Maker, then must the Psalms, which are full of Prayers and Praises to him, be the most sublime and excellent part of our Devotion; which may very well engage our Attendance upon them, and fix our most serious Study and Meditation in them.

4thly, For the Usefulness of these Psalms, they are fitted for all the publick Occasions of the Churches, and likewise for all the Necessities of private Persons. Here are Forms of Confession for the Penitent, of Prayers for the Afflicted,



Afflicted, of Praises for the Thankful, and of Instructions for all. And these excellent Forms are adapted to Men of all Ages and Degrees, High and Low, Young and Old, Rich and Poor: they are proper for Kings, Priests, and People, who as they all need, so may they be all benefited by them; being suited to all Estates, both of Prosperity and Adversity. In a word, here all Men may find something, that will so exactly answer their Necessities, as if their Condition had been foreseen, and themselves to be particularly provided for. Here we are taught to rejoice in God, to put our whole Trust in him, to own his Mercies and Deliverances, and to do all things to his Praise and Glory. So that there is no part of Divine Service of greater benefit and advantage to us, than the frequent and pious Use of these Psalms; wherein we may be supply'd with devout Forms of all sorts, at all times, upon all occasions, and in all conditions; and such too, as being indited by the Spirit of God that cannot err, may be more safely used than any fallible Compositions of Men, subject to many Failings; and are infinitely to be prefer'd before those sudden and hasty Effusions, which the Folly and Frenzy of our Times have led many into.

Lastly, For the Variety of these Psalms, some learned and devout Men, who have diligently study'd and perus'd them, have reduc'd them all under these four Heads, *viz.* Psalms of Instruction, of Exhortation, of Supplication, and of Thanksgiving: Which things are interspers'd up and down thro the whole Book of Psalms, and contain the Matter and Substance of all of them; as by a short view of them will plainly appear. And,

(1.) For the Psalms of Instruction, they contain many divine Truths and excellent Lessons to be learn'd and practis'd by all that will attain to true Happiness. Thus the first Psalm instructs us in the Blessedness of the Godly, who walk not in the ways of the Wicked, but in the paths of God's Commandments; shewing the former to lead to Misery and Destruction, and the latter to Peace and Prosperity here, and to endless Bliss and Glory hereafter. The second Psalm prophetically describes the Coming and Kingdom of the *Messiah*, together with the Enmity and Opposition that the World would raise against it; which yet would tend only to the increase of it, and bring in many Profelytes to it. The third, fourth, and following Psalms, teach us Courage and Confidence in God, Patience  
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in Afflictions, and shew the bearing of the Cross to be the way to wearing of a Crown. The eighth, the nineteenth, and many other Psalms afford us many useful Lessons and Meditations, taken from the Works of God, both of Creation and Providence; shewing the infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness of our great Creator, in all the Operations of his Hand. There are other Psalms that speak of the Birth, Passion and Death of the Messias; together with his Descent into Hell, his Resurrection from the Dead, and his Ascension up into Heaven. All which may help to confirm us in the Truth of those great Articles of our Faith, and keep us from being drawn away from the Belief of them.

These Psalms of Instruction are too numerous to be particularly mention'd: they all help to set forth God's Glory in creating us; his Bounty in sustaining us; his Providence in protecting us; his Mercy in redeeming us; and his Wisdom in ordering all things for the Good of his People. All which teach us Lessons of great Importance, and serve to make us wise unto Salvation.

(2.) For the Psalms of Exhortation, these are so many loud Calls and Admonitions to learn the foregoing Lessons, and to practise all those Duties that result from them; such as the loving of God with the most ardent Affection, the fearing him above all things, the putting our whole Trust in him, the honouring of his holy Name and Word, and the serving him truly all the Days of our Life. The Psalms abound with Exhortations to these and all other religious Duties, which are scatter'd up and down every where, and press'd with the most powerful Arguments, the strongest Motives, and the most convincing Examples. There we may find many rich and precious Promises to invite us to Holiness, and many severe Threatnings to fright us from all Ungodliness; together with many lively Instances and Examples to make us mindful of both; there we are called upon to eschew Evil, and do Good, to seek Peace and ensue it; for the Eyes of God are upon the Righteous, and his Face is set against them that do Evil. There we have *David's* Example as well as Precept, for banishing all vain Thoughts, for hating all false Ways, and for going on steddily in the Paths of God's Commandments. If at any time, thro Weakness or Surprise, we fall into any Sin, we are taught by *David's* Repentance to bewail our Iniquity, and to renew our Purposes  
and



and Resolutions of Amendment, as the best way of averting the Anger, and regaining the Favour of God. In a word, we are there exhorted to do what God commands, to believe his Promises, to fear his Threats, to comfort our selves in his Mercy, and to rely upon his Power and Goodness in the greatest Extremities; to all which, in that Divine Book, we have many pious and earnest Exhortations.

(3.) For the Psalms of Supplication, they contain many good Prayers for all sorts of Blessings, relating both to the Life that now is, and that which is to come. For this Life that now is, we pray for all temporal Blessings, such as Peace and Prosperity, Victory over Enemies, Deliverance from all Evil, and the like: for the Life which is to come, we pray for all spiritual Blessings, such as the Pardon of Sin, Divine Grace and Assistance against our ghostly Enemies. And because we are utterly unable by our own Power or Policy to procure these things for our selves, the best of us having many good Things to desire, many Wants to be supply'd, and many Infirmities to be relieved; therefore we are encourag'd and embolden'd to have recourse unto God by Prayer for these things; and to make our Requests known unto him, who is the Fountain of all Goodness, and is alone able to give us those great Blessings. Now this Book of the Psalms will furnish us with many excellent Forms of Prayer and Supplication for all these things; and that not only for our selves, but for all others, for whom we are bound to pray, for the whole Church and People of God, for Kings and all that are in Authority, and for all that stand related to us by the Bonds of Nature or Gratitude: for all which we may be supply'd with proper Petitions out of this Divine Treasury of Devotion.

Lastly, For the Psalms of Thanksgiving, they consist of Songs of Joy and Praise for Mercies receiv'd. And with these the whole Book of Psalms doth so abound in all parts of it, that 'twill be needless to recite them. And because the Mercies we receive are of several kinds, viz. Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal; therefore have we different Songs of Thanksgiving for each of them. The Mercies that appertain to the Body, such as Health, Strength, Plenty, and Deliverance, are in sundry Psalms piously acknowledged and remember'd; the Mercies that belong to the Soul, such as the Pardon of Sin, the Favour of God, the Means of Grace, and the Hopes of Glory, are likewise frequently celebrated with Psalms of Thanksgiving. In short,



short, the Precept of St. Paul in the Text, and the Example of holy David in the Psalms, direct us to *give Thanks always unto God for all things*. There is no time when this Duty is unseasonable, and therefore it is to be done always. And there is nothing betides us, but what deserves our Thanks; and therefore 'tis to be given *for all things*, for Adversity as well as Prosperity, both being in their season necessary and beneficial to us: for all which things we are furnish'd with excellent Forms of Thanksgiving out of these Psalms of David, which being to be offer'd up to God the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, have very fitly the *Gloria Patri* annex'd to them; saying at the end of each, *Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*.

Thus we see the Antiquity, the Authority, the Usefulness, the Excellency, and the Variety of these Psalms: All which justly deserve and call for our daily Attendance upon and Attention to them.

But how are we to use them to the Benefit and Comfort of our Souls? The Answer to that will lead me to the last thing propounded, *viz.*

The manner of saying or singing these Psalms aright; and that is, First, By preparing our selves by Study and Meditation before-hand. This a very Learned Man hath compared to the tuning of a musical Instrument, which can make no Harmony till it be rais'd to a proper pitch, and taken in a right key. In like manner, we can make no Melody in our Hearts to the Lord, till we have skrew'd up our Affections, and put them in a due Disposition for the Service of God. And this we must endeavour to do before we begin; for there is a natural Deadness and Dullness in our Hearts, that must be remov'd before we can say, with holy David, *My Heart is ready, O God, my Heart is ready; I will sing and give Praise with the best Member I have*: Psal. 108. 1. Till that be done, the Heart will be out of tune, and that can yield nothing but Discord and displeasing Sounds in the Ears of God: And therefore that we may *sing with the Spirit, and with the Understanding also*, we must prepare our Hearts before-hand, by perusing and considering what we are about to say and offer up unto the Lord, and thereby wind up our Minds and Voices into a due Frame of Devotion.

Secondly, To say these Psalms aright, we must not only prepare our Hearts before-hand, but likewise bring suitable

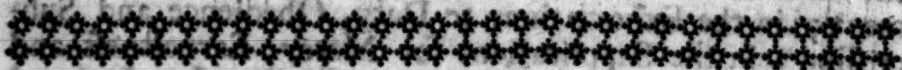
ble Affections in the reading or singing of them. The Heart must go along with the Matter of the Psalms, and be suitably affected in all the parts of them; that is, in the Confessions of Sin, to stir up Sorrow and Self-Abasement; in the Exhortations to Duty, Obedience and Submission; in the Supplications for Mercy, Earnestness and Importunity; in the Thanksgivings for Benefits, Joy and Cheerfulness, and the like: which is to tune the Mind to the several Notes and Strains of true Devotion.

Neither are these to be only transient Flashes, like the Fits of a Fever, that come and go again; but abiding Flames, like the Fires upon the Altar, that were always kept burning; or like the Vestal Flames, that never went out. We must nourish and retain these pious Affections, and keep up a constant Heat and Warmth in the Soul, that we be not at any time cold and *slothful in Business*; but always *fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*.

This is to *speak to our selves in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, and to make Melody in our Hearts unto the Lord*. This we find David did, not only with vocal and harmonious Singing of Praise, for which he was stil'd the *Sweet-Singer of Israel*; but with all sorts of instrumental Musick, for he often calls upon his Lute and Harp, the Tabret and the Organ, to sound forth the Praises of God: from whence not only the *Jews* in the Old Testament, but Christians in the New, have continu'd to sing the Songs of *Zion*; and with Instruments of Musick, as well as Voice, made Melody unto the Lord ever since: and none but ignorant, jarring, and discordant Souls have ever scrupled or quarrell'd at it. For Musick and Singing are well known to stir up the Affections of Men, to elevate their Minds, and exhilarate their Spirits, and so make them the fitter for Devotion: it helps to compose the Thoughts, and to drive away all evil Suggestions; it quickens and prepares the Heart to be better edify'd by Divine Service. In a word, it makes the whole Service of God the more solemn and august, and the People more serious, reverent, and devout in it.

Wherefore, let us continue and delight in this pious Practice, which will qualify us for the Work of Heaven, and fit us for the Blessed Society of Saints and Angels. In short, let us sing *David's Psalms* with *David's Spirit*; and then, like him, we shall be Men after God's own Heart. I shall conclude this Discourse, as we are com-  
manded

manded to do the Psalms, with *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: As it was in the Beginning, &c.*



## DISCOURSE XXX.

St. LUKE IV. 16.

*And he came to Nazareth, where he was bred up; and, as his Custom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath-Day, and stood up for to read.*

Together with CHAP. XIX. 48. latter part.

*All the People were very attentive to hear him.*

**A**FTER the Saying or Singing of the Psalms, follows an Order in the Rubrick, for reading the Lessons, in these words:

*Then shall he read distinctly, with an audible Voice, the first Lesson, taken out of the Old Testament, as is appointed in the Kalendar, except there be proper Lessons assign'd for that Day: He that readeth, so standing and turning himself, as he may best be heard of all such as are present. Where,*

*He that officiates is order'd to read distinctly, that he may be the better understood; and with an audible Voice, that he may be the better heard. The thing in course to be read, is the*

*First Lesson, taken out of the Old Testament; which contains the Law and the Prophets; both which have many Predictions of the Messiah, and many Precepts, by Repentance and a holy Life, to prepare for his Coming. And therefore these were antiently read both by Jews and Christians in their solemn Worship; the Jewish Service consisting chiefly in reading the Law of Moses, and singing the Psalms of David: for so the Apostle tells us, Acts 15. 21. Moses of old time hath in every City them*



that preach him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-day. *Cassian*, a Learned Writer, observes, That this Custom of reading the first Lesson out of the Old Testament, was us'd in all the Churches of Egypt, lib. 2. cap. 4. And the same Usage continues with us to this day. Moreover, he that reads is order'd to do it *standing*, that being a Posture of Reverence to the Holy Scriptures, and a Token of assenting and adhering to them; in which Posture he is so to turn himself, as he may be best heard by all that are present: implying, that as the Minister is to be devout and reverent in reading, so the People are to be diligent and attentive in hearing.

Of these things I shall discourse to you at this time from these words of St. *Luke*, concerning our Saviour, and his Hearers: *He came to Nazareth, where he was brought up; and, as his Custom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And all the People were very attentive to hear him.* I shall briefly explain the Words; and then observe from them, the Minister's Duty in the publick Reading, and the People's Duty in Hearing the Holy Scriptures.

*He came to Nazareth*, a City in *Galilee*, the Place of his Conception and Education: for tho he was born in *Bethlehem*, yet he was conceiv'd in *Nazareth*, where he was likewise brought up; for which reasons he made that the Place of his frequent Resort and Residence.

At his being there, *as his Custom was, he went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day*: Where we may observe,

1<sup>st</sup>, That our Saviour Christ was a constant Frequenter of Publick Worship: He did not forsake the solemn Assemblies of God's People, as the manner of some is; nor did he go but seldom, or now and then to them, as the Custom of others is: but his Custom was, to give his due and daily Attendance upon them, and he would not omit so great and solemn a Duty as the glorifying of God together. And this may justly check the profane Neglect of such as withdraw themselves from the publick Assemblies, or seldom or never attend the Divine Service. Again,

2<sup>dly</sup>, Our Saviour made no Scruple or Difficulty to join in the Jewish Service, in which he was brought up: and though the People of *Nazareth* were none of the best, as appears by that Proverbial Saying, *Can any Good come out of Nazareth?* yet he made no Separation from them upon

upon any Pretences of greater Purity, or better means of Edification; but join'd with the Congregation there, as a Member of it, in Reading, and all other parts of the Jewish Worship: which upbraids the Schism and Separation of such as break Communion upon such vain Pretences.

3dly, Our Saviour kept to the publick Places of Worship that were set apart for that purpose; for he frequented the Temple and the Synagogues, and gave both his Precept and Example to his Disciples and Followers to do the same. When he was at *Jerusalem*, he resorted to the Temple; and during his Abode at *Nazareth*, our Text tells us, that, *as his Custom was, he went to the Synagogue*. Upon which words the Reverend and Learned Dr. *Lightsfoot* observes, That he went still to the Synagogue there, as to his Parish-Church, and observ'd all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Synagogue-Worship. He did not resort to separate Meetings, in private and unconsecrated Places; but his Custom was always to repair to the House of God, which he stil'd, the House of Prayer; and his Recourse was ever to the Temple and the Synagogue. When some began to profane the Temple, by setting up a Market there, he himself whip'd the Buyers and Sellers out of it, with this sharp Rebuke; *My House shall be call'd the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves*. And elsewhere, *Make not my Father's House a House of Merchandize*: which plainly condemns the Practice of all such as leave the Church, or the consecrated Places of publick Worship, and prefer Barns, Common-Halls, and private Houses before them.

4thly, Our Saviour observ'd the solemn appointed Time of publick Devotion; for his Custom was to go to the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day, which is our Saturday, and was the stated Day or Time of the Jewish Worship. He made no difficulty to conform to the Customs, Rules and Orders of the Jewish Church; but comply'd with it in the Times, Places, Gestures, and all other Modes and Circumstances of their publick Service: which may teach us not to be querelous or contentious about such Matters, but, by our Saviour's Example, shew a ready Obedience and Submission to the Wisdom and Authority of the Church in these things.

But the main thing to be consider'd at present from this Text, is, the last Clause of it, *viz. Our Saviour's* standing

standing up and reading in the Synagogue: *He stood up for to read.* Where we may observe,

(1.) The Manner or Gesture us'd by him in reading, which was standing. *He stood up*, thereby shewing the decent Regard and Reverence that is to be shew'd to the Holy Scriptures above all other Writings: and from this Example of our Saviour, our Church hath order'd the same Posture to be us'd by the Minister in reading them.

(2.) The Subject-matter, or what it was that he read to them; and that was taken out of the Books of *Moses* and the Prophets. So the *Acts* of the Apostles inform us, that *Moses was read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-day*, Acts 15. 21. And when Christ exhorted the Jews and others, to *search the Scriptures*; he meant the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, which were all the Scriptures then extant: and because *they testify'd of him*, and all their Hopes of eternal Life were founded upon them, he willed them to read, study, and search into them, to beget and confirm their Faith in him, from whom alone Life and Salvation could be expected. And this is a good reason for our Church's appointing the first Lesson to be taken and read out of the Old Testament, the reading whereof is, in the fore-cited place of the *Acts*, term'd preaching, chap. 15. 21. *Moses* hath in every City those that *preach him*, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-day. Preaching in the general is the publishing the Mind and Will of God about the way and means of Man's Salvation. And this may be done either by word of mouth, or by writing, or by both.

The Preaching by word of mouth, is the delivering by Speech the Truths that God puts into the Mouth. Thus *Noah* is stil'd a *Preacher of Righteousness*, to the old World; *Lot* to the *Sodomites*; *Jonas* to the *Ninivites*; and so were the Prophets, by delivering the several Messages which God put into their Mouths.

In the *New Testament*, *John the Baptist* was the first Gospel-Preacher, by preaching the Doctrine of Repentance, to prepare the way of the Lord. Then Christ himself is said to preach Salvation to Mankind, as appears by his Sermon on the Mount, and the many Parables deliver'd by him. After his Ascension, the Apostles are said to preach the Word every where, by delivering to others what they had receiv'd from Christ.



The Preaching by writing, is the putting the Divine Truths they receiv'd into writing, and transmitting them down for the benefit of Posterity. And this was done by the Penmen of the Holy Scriptures, who not only spake, but wrote as they were moved and directed by the Holy Ghost; for which reason all Scripture is said to be *given by Inspiration of God*, 2 Tim. 3. 16. Thus Moses and the Prophets in the Old Testament, and Christ and his Apostles in the New, were not only Preachers of God's Word in their own times, but continue still to preach to us by their Sacred Writings; in which being assisted and inspired by the Divine Spirit, they have deliver'd down to us the infallible Oracles of God.

So that the Preaching now, in our days, consists partly in reading, and partly in expounding these inspired Writings: Of which two ways.

The *1st*, viz. The reading of God's Word, is undoubtedly the best and safest; for in reading the Holy Scriptures, we certainly read the Words of eternal Life, and the infallible Dictates of God's holy Spirit; there we are sure of having the Word of God pure from the Fountain, without any Mixture of Error or Deception: whereas the Expositions and Comments upon them are but the Inventions of Men subject to Error, and so may, and often do occasion Mistakes, and lead into great Errors. By this means the Word of God may be corrupted in the Streams that flow from it; and indeed 'tis often made to taste of the Mineral, and receive a Tincture from the earthen Vessel thro which it passes: that is, it partakes sometimes of the Infirmities and Imperfections of the Preacher, who may either wilfully or unwittingly taint these Waters of Life, and draw foul and impure Streams out of the Wells of Salvation. But in reading the Holy Scriptures we are safe from these Dangers, and speak as the Oracles of God, without Error or Corruption. Here St. Peter tells us, *We have a sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as to a Light shining in a dark Place.* And that we may not be misled by false Glosses and Interpretations, the same Apostle adds, that *no Prophecy of Holy Scripture is of any private Interpretation*; meaning that private Persons should not fix their own Sense, or trust too much to their own private and singular Interpretations of Holy Scripture, which is the way to all manner of Errors and Heresies: but rely chiefly upon

upon the publick Doctrines and Expositions of the Church, which is the Pillar and Ground of Truth.

In short, our Saviour's Example in standing up and reading the Scriptures in the Synagogue, according to the Custom of the Jewish Church, hath given sufficient Authority to all Christian Churches to do the same, by making the reading of them a great part of the publick Service, as it is with us to this day: taking the first Lesson out of the Old Testament, from whence the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets are publicly read to us; and the second Lesson out of the New Testament, from whence the Gospel of Christ, and the Epistles of the Apostles are likewise read in the Ears of the People.

The reading then of these Divine Oracles is the Duty of Christ's Ministers, in all the publick Offices and Ministrations of the Church. Hence *St. Paul* exhorts *Timothy* to give attendance to Reading, 1 Tim. 4. 13. And this is to be done not slightly and carelessly, as the manner of some is, who make it only a matter of Course or a common Lecture; but zealously and intently, taking it for the Word of God, and not of Man. So the Primitive Christians did, who read the Scriptures with that Intention and Fervency, that (as *Origen* tells us) the devout Reader seem'd to be in a manner inspired; which condemns the Coldness and Indifference of too many in our days in this holy Exercise.

Thus having shew'd the Minister's Duty in Reading, I proceed, 2dly, To the People's Duty in Hearing the Holy Scriptures; from those words of *St. Luke*, And all the People were attentive to hear him. This was the Practice of Christ's Disciples and Followers, who were as willing and ready to hear, as he was to speak or read to them. And so will it be with us, if our Hearts are rightly affected towards him. *Samuel* shew'd his readiness to it, saying, Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth. *Solomon* bids us to hearken to Instruction, and to open our Ears to Understanding. The Prophet *Isaiab* wills us to hear, that our Souls may live. Our Saviour calls upon all, saying, He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear. And *St. James* wills us to be swift to hear. All which, and many more places that may be cited, shew it to be an indispensable Duty to hearken to God's Word; and if he find a Tongue to speak, we ought to find Ears to hear.



But how are we to hear the Holy Scriptures read to us, so as to profit by them? Why! we are to hear them with Reverence, Attention, Faith and Obedience; of each of which something briefly.

(1.) I say, we are to read and hear God's Word with a holy Awe and Reverence: for this we have many Precepts and Examples; particularly that of the devout Jews, in the Eighth Chapter of *Nehemiah*; where, when *Ezra* read the Law to the People, and blessed the Lord, 'tis said, they lifted up their Hands, bowed down their Heads, and fell on their Faces; all of them Tokens of great Humility and Reverence. When we hear the Scriptures read, we are to imagine, that we hear God speaking to us, or that the Reader is then delivering to us a Message from God; and sure we are to demean our selves with the greatest Respect imaginable, when the great King of Heaven and Earth is delivering his Mind to us. And therefore we find *St. Paul* thanking God in the behalf of the *Thessalonians*, that when they heard the Word read to them, they receiv'd it not as the Word of Man, but, as in truth it was, the Word of God; 1 *Thess.* 2. 13. There cannot be a greater sign of the Contempt of any Person, than to slight his Words, and despise what he saith; and therefore if we will not be found Despisers of God, we must shew an awful Regard to his Word, and avoid all manner of Irreverence in the Hearing of it.

(2.) We are to hear the Scriptures read with Attention and Diligence; so did those devout Jews before-mention'd: When *Ezra* read the Law from Morning to Mid-day, before the Men and Women, and those that could understand; 'tis said, *The Ears of all the People were attentive to the Book of the Law*; *Nehem.* 8. 3. The same is affirm'd here in the Text, that when *Christ* taught in the Temple, all the People were very attentive to hear him; in the Original it is, they hanged upon him; and were so intent, as if their Ears were fixed to his Tongue. The Author to the *Hebrews* wills us to give the more earnest heed to the things that we hear, lest at any time we should let them slip; *Heb.* 2. 1. Indeed, the Excellency, the Truth and Certainty of God's Word, above all other Writings, should make us attend to it with the greatest Intention of Heart and Mind. Our Eyes should be fixed on him that reads it, as if we expected something more than ordinary from it. Our Ears should be open to receive the Instructions



of it: And our Hearts ever ready to meditate and ponder upon it.

This is the way to hear with Understanding, to attain to the Knowledge of the Truth, and to be better'd by it: Whereas the careless Hearer suffers the Word to pass away as a Tale that is told, and so is many times the worse, instead of the better for it. For as the Spider sucks Poison out of the sweetest Flowers; so do these suck Errors and evil Principles out of the Word of Truth: and that for want of giving due Heed and Attention to it; for 'tis Negligence and Inadvertence in hearing, that makes the Holy Scriptures so little understood, so mightily perverted, and so soon forgotten: which should make us more diligent and attentive in Hearing the Holy Scriptures read and expounded to us.

(3.) We are to hear the Word of God with Faith, or a firm Belief of the Truth of it: *Oportet discentem credere*, He that will learn must believe his Teacher; for without that, there can be no Proficiency in any Art or Science, and much less in Grace or the Knowledge of Divine Truths. *The Word of God*, whether read or heard, can work effectually upon none but them that believe, 1 Thess. 2. 13. Indeed it cannot be conceiv'd how it should have any Efficacy otherwise; for who would tremble at Threats, or be afraid of Judgments, which he does not believe? or who would be encourag'd by Blessings or Promises to which he gives no credit? And therefore the Apostle tells us, that the Word preach'd profited not the Jews, because it was not mix'd with Faith in them that heard it, Heb. 4. 2. 'Tis the firm Belief and Persuasion of the Truth of a thing that moves Men to the effectual Prosecution of it. He that doubts or questions a matter, will act but slowly in it; and he that denies or disbelieves it, will not stir a foot after it: but he that is well satisfy'd in the Certainty and Reality of it, will pursue with Vigour what he thinks will make for his Good. And therefore to read or hear the Holy Scriptures to any purpose, we must do both with a full Assurance of Faith.

Lastly, We must hear the Word of God with a tractable and obedient Frame of Spirit; for 'tis not the Hearers only, but the Doers of the Word that shall be blessed in their Lives. St. Paul commended the Romans for obeying from the Heart the Form of Doctrine deliver'd to them, Rom. 2. 13. And if ye know these things (saith our Saviour)

vour) *happy are ye if ye do them.* A bare speculative Knowledge, gain'd by Reading or Hearing only, without Practice, will never bring us to Heaven; for *not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of God, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, Mat. 7. 21.*

Wherefore to conclude: Let us so read, and so hear the Holy Scriptures, that we may be thereby built up in our most holy Faith, and be made wise unto Salvation; which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, &c.

### DISCOURSE XXXI.

ISA. VI. 3.

*And one cried to another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole Earth is full of his Glory.*

**A**FTER the Lessons, are appointed Hymns to be sung or said, to render the publick Service of God the more easy and the more delightfom: for this we have the Example of our Blessed Saviour, who when he discours'd his Disciples about his Passion, *sung a Hymn, Mat. 26. 30.* And we have the Precept of St. Paul to the same purpose, *to admonish one another with Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing with Grace in our Hearts unto the Lord; Col. 3. 16.*

Accordingly after the Morning first Lesson, there follow two Hymns. The First whereof is that of *Te Deum*, so call'd from the first words, with which it begins, viz. *Te Deum laudamus*; in English, *We praise thee, O God*: which is a Song of great Antiquity, and for the Piety and Pithiness of the Matter contain'd in it, hath been long us'd and highly esteem'd in the Church; being agreeable to what St. John relates of some in the *Revelation*, who *rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*; Chap. 4. 8.

Indeed this Hymn of *Te Deum* is not to be found entire in so many words in Holy Scripture, but yet 'tis founded upon



upon it, and all the parts of it are warranted and taken out of the Sacred Writ. 'Tis found in the Works of St. *Ambrose*, and therefore is generally ascrib'd to him; and 'twas compos'd (as 'tis thought) upon the occasion of some great and eminent Convert, suppos'd to be St. *Austin*, who came to be baptiz'd of him; and hath ever since been us'd in the Liturgies of the Church, as it is in ours to this day. 'Tis thought to be an Enlargement upon this Song of the Seraphims, mention'd in our Text, where 'tis said, in the Verse immediately before, that they had each of them six Wings, with four whereof they cover'd their Face and their Feet, and with the other twain they did fly. And one cried to another, and said, *Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory*: where their crying to and taking it one from another, is a farther Confirmation of this alternate way of praying to and praising God.

But to come to the Hymn it self, it consists of three Parts:

The *First* is, A Profession or Publication of God's Praises, *We praise thee, O God*; with the Persons concern'd in it: from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> Verse.

The *Second* is, A Confession of Faith in the Holy Trinity; with each of the three Persons in it: from the 10<sup>th</sup> Verse to the 19<sup>th</sup>.

The *Third* is, A general Supplication for all God's People, and more particularly for our selves; from the 20<sup>th</sup> Verse to the End. Of each of which briefly and distinctly. And,

*First*, Of the Profession or Publication of God's Praises: *We praise thee, O God; we acknowledg thee to be the Lord*. Where we may observe,

1. The actual Exercise of this great Duty of celebrating the Glory of God, and the publick Acknowledgment of his Power and Dominion over all his Creatures. After which, we

2. Rehearse the Company that join with us in setting forth his Praises, and giving him the Glory due unto his Name. And they are; First, All the Earth, with all the Creatures and Inhabitants thereof, *All the Earth doth worship thee the Father everlasting*; or as it is in the Text, *The whole Earth is full of thy Glory*. For tho Man only is the



vocal Instrument of his Glory, yet all other Creatures are the silent Orators of his Praise. To these do join, in a higher manner, all the Inhabitants of Heaven; of which the first Rank are the glorious Angels: *To thee all Angels cry aloud, the Heavens and all the Powers therein.* Among these, *The Cherubim and Seraphim*, with all the heavenly Host, are ever sounding forth their triumphant Hymns, and particularly that of the *Trisagium*; *Continually crying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabbath.* Where the thrice repeating of Holy, applies it to the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; who are each of them pronounc'd and worship'd as Holy, and yet they all are but one Lord of Hosts, who *fill Heaven and Earth with the Majesty of his Glory.*

After these follow the whole Train of glorify'd Spirits, who have vanquish'd all the Terrors and Temptations of this World, and are arriv'd to the Mansions of Bliss and Glory above. Among these *the glorious Company of the Apostles* lead the Van, who were the first Preachers and Publishers of the Gospel here on Earth, and are now for ever praising God for it in Heaven.

Next follow *the goodly Fellowship of the Prophets*, who prophesy'd and foretold the Coming of a Saviour, and now join in blessing and praising God for him. After which, *the noble Army of Martyrs* bring up the Rear, who sacrific'd their Lives for the Testimony of Christ, and now live for ever to glorify him for whom they died.

This is that blessed Society with which we are to join, and bear a part in the heavenly Choir; stild by the Apostle, *An innumerable Company of Angels, the general Assembly of the Church of the First-born, that are written in Heaven*; where God, the Judge of all, is attended by the Spirits of just Men made perfect; where also is Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, continually offering up the Blood of Sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel; Heb. 12. 22, 23, 24. This is the first part of this Divine Hymn, which contains the Company with which we are to join in praising God.

The Second is, A Confession of Faith in the Holy Trinity, with all the three Persons in it, from the 10th to the 19th Verse. Where we have,

1. The Persons that make this Confession, and that is, *The Holy Church throughout all the World*, which hath ever own'd

own'd their Belief of this Holy Mystery, and defended it against all the Hereticks that have oppos'd it.

2. We have the Confession it self, which is the Belief of the Trinity in general, and of each Person in particular; for the whole Catholick Church is here said to *acknowledg God the Father, of an infinite Majesty, the All-wise Maker and Preserver of the World, and all things in it; and likewise his honourable, true, and only Son, who redeem'd and ransom'd Mankind with his own most precious Blood; as also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and Sanctifier of all his People.*

But because the Divinity of the second Person in the Trinity hath been most of all doubted and deny'd by Hereticks; and because the Work of Man's Redemption was chiefly effected by what he did and suffer'd for us: therefore the Church in this Hymn, and in all her Creeds, hath made the largest and most particular Profession of our Faith in him, and what he hath done for us; which take up the six following Versicles.

The first whereof begins with acknowledging the great Glory of his Godhead, in these words: *Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.* Where by giving him the title of *the King of Glory*, we own him to be truly God; for that Title is never in Scripture given to any other. Hence we find the Psalmist asking the question, *Who is the King of Glory?* and then answers it himself, *It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in Battel;* Psal. 24. 8. where he calls upon the Heavens, saying, *Lift up your heads, O ye Gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting Doors, and the King of Glory shall come in:* which is meant of Christ's triumphant Ascending into Heaven. And then repeats the question again, *Who is the King of Glory?* *It is the Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory;* ver. 9, 10. Where he is call'd the King of Glory, partly from his being receiv'd up into Glory, and partly because he purchas'd Glory for us, and receives Glory from us, and will at last receive us into Glory; all which justly give him the Title of King of Glory.

To the Glory and Greatness of his Kingdom, is added, 2dly, The near Relation he bears to the Father, with the everlasting Continuance of it, in the next words: *Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.* A Son, and yet from Everlasting: A Son of the Father, not by Creation, as the Angels are, nor by Adoption, as we are; but by an eternal

eternal Generation, and an ineffable Communication of the Godhead to him. By which he is stil'd the only Son, and the only begotten Son of the Father, being born of him in a way, that never any was before or beside him; thereby becoming *the express Image of his Father's Person, and the Brightness of his Glory.*

When this excellent Hymn had thus describ'd the transcendent Greatness of the Person of Christ, in Terms as high and lofty as words can express; it goes on,

3dly, To set forth his great Humility and Condescension under all this Glory. And this begins with these words; *When thou tookest upon thee to deliver Man, thou didst not abhor the Virgin's Womb.* Tho he was of that high and noble Extraction, as to be begotten of the Father before all Worlds, and so had his Being from everlasting; yet for our sake he admitted another and far inferiour Generation, viz. in time to be born of a Woman; and as *Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, so he likewise took part of the same.* When he took upon him to deliver Man, as he did by being our Surety and Saviour, he was content to take upon him our Nature, that he might take away our Sins; to which end, he disdain'd not the Virgin's Womb, but made his Passage into the World by the course of human Flesh, and thereby became one of us, to make us one with the Father and him. To the Meanness of his Birth was added,

4thly, The Sharpness of a bitter and accursed Death, to lead us to everlasting Life: so the next words tell us; *When thou hadst overcome the Sharpness of Death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers.* There is a Sting or Sharpness in Death, put into it by Sin, which gives it all its Malignity and Terrour: *The Sting of Death is Sin,* saith the Apostle. Now Christ by his Death and Resurrection pull'd out this Sting, and overcame this Sharpness of Death; which made the Apostle triumph over it, saying, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?* And then thanks God for our Victory over both, thro Jesus Christ our Lord; 1 Cor. 15. By this he is said to *open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers.* Sin shut the Gates of Heaven against us, and set up a flaming Sword to keep us out of Paradise, from whence it excluded our first Parents: But Christ, by his overcoming Death by the power of his Resurrection, hath open'd those everlasting Doors, and given us an entrance into the Kingdom



of Heaven: not indeed to all Men, but only to all Believers, who by a firm and lively Faith accept of and adhere to him; for these he hath so loosen'd the Pains, and broken the Chains of Death, that they shall not be long holden of them. After these Acts of Humiliation and Condescension for the Good of Mankind, he is said,

*scilicet*, To be receiv'd up into Heaven, and seated there in the greatest Majesty and Glory: *Thou sittest at the Right Hand of God, in the Glory of the Father.* The Right Hand, you know, is the Post of Honour; and the Right Hand of God being the Place of the highest Power and Dignity, the Son of God is seated there, as a Reward for promoting the Glory of his Father, and the Salvation of Mankind.

From thence we are, lastly, here taught to expect his second Coming to Judgment, saying, *We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge.* Which is matter of Comfort to all good Christians, that he who is their Advocate and Redeemer, is to be their Judg; from whom they may comfortably hope for that blessed Sentence of Absolution, *Come ye blessed of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepar'd for you, &c.* And likewise of Terrour to all wicked Men, that he whose Mercy they have wilfully despis'd and rejected, will bring them to Judgment; from whom they can expect nothing but the dreadful Sentence of Condemnation, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire.* For the Judg of all the World will surely do right, and render unto all Men according to their Works; to them that by patient Continuance in well-doing seek for Glory and Immortality, eternal Life; but Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul that doth evil: Rom. 2. 6, 7. These are the principal Points of Faith, which we here profess to believe of the Holy Trinity, and particularly of the Second Person in it; which is the Second Part of this Hymn.

The Third consists in general Supplications for the whole Church, and more particularly for our selves; which reach to the end of it. The general Supplication for all God's People, is in these words: *We therefore pray thee, help thy Servants, whom thou hast redeem'd with thy precious Blood.* Where the term *therefore* shews it to be a Petition infer'd either from all the foregoing parts of the Hymn, or else more especially from what went immediately before, concerning

cerning the Day of Judgment; that considering the near and dreadful Approach of that Day, we pray God to help and prepare all his People for it; that they who are redeem'd by Christ's Blood, may be sav'd by his Merits: and not only so, but,

(2.) That he would *make them to be number'd with his Saints in Glory everlasting.* That they may be found not, among the Goats at his left hand, to be doom'd to everlasting Misery; but with the Sheep at his right hand, to be led into his eternal Kingdom. To attain which high and noble Ends, we are taught,

(3.) To pray with the Psalmist, *O Lord, save thy People, and bless thine Heritage:* that is, Deliver them from all temporal Evils here, and crown them with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus hereafter. To which is added,

(4.) Another Petition, *to govern them, and lift them up for ever.* Where we pray God to govern his People, as a King doth his Subjects, and to lift up their heads above their Enemies; to rule them by his Holy Spirit, and to advance them above the reach of all Temptations: and in short, to guide them by his Counsel here, and at last to bring them to Glory.

In order hereunto, the Church in the next words acknowledges both her Duty and her Practice; which is, daily to praise and adore our Creator: saying, *Day by day we magnify thee, and we worship thy Name, ever World without end.* Because the divine Favours and Blessings are multiply'd and renew'd upon us every day, we therefore pay our daily Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving; and because his Mercy endureth for ever, we declare our Willingness to worship him, ever world without end; saying with David, that great Master of Thanksgiving, *Every day will I bless thee, and praise thy Name for ever and ever;* Psal. 145. 2.

And now having pray'd in general for the needful Supplies of Grace, for all the Members of the Church, we apply more particularly for our selves; putting up our Morning-Prayer for Protection and Deliverance from all Sin and Danger: saying, *Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without Sin.*

We cannot continue in safety one moment without God's Protection, being still liable to Temptations, and expos'd to continual Dangers: And therefore it stands us upon, every



every day to implore the Divine Care and Providence over us, to be preserv'd from falling into Sin, and running into any kind of Danger.

But tho' our Frailty be such, as makes us stand in continual need of divine Grace and Succour; yet our Sins too are so many and great, as may justly deprive us of the Assistance of both. Which makes it necessary to beg for Mercy and Forgiveness of them, saying, in the following words, *O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.* Where the Petition is doubled, to shew the Earnestness and Importunity of the Petitioners, as also the urgent Necessity they have of it. So did the two blind Men in the Gospel, who hearing of our Saviour's passing by, cry'd out, *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, thou Son of David.* And when the Multitude rebuk'd them, that they might hold their peace, they cry'd the more earnestly, repeating again the same words, *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, thou Son of David.* And the Issue was attended with the desir'd Success; for *their Eyes were open'd, and their Sight restor'd to them:* as we read, *Mat. 20. 30, 31.* Such fervent Prayers (as St. James tells us) will avail much: and therefore our Church teaches us to put up the same Prayer, and to double the Request; *O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us:* which is no vain Repetition, when offer'd up with Earnestness, Faith, and true Affection; especially considering, that the one may be for Mercy to pardon what is past, and the other for Mercy to prevent it for the time to come.

This then being a Matter of so great Importance and Necessity, our Church teaches us to urge the Request, and to dwell a while upon it; adding farther, *O Lord, let thy Mercy lighten upon us, as our Trust is in thee.* To lighten the Burden of our Sins, and to lighten our Hearts under the Burden of our Sorrows for them, we desire his Mercy to lighten upon us, and that because we place our whole Hope and Trust in it; meaning, that we plead not any Worth or Merit of our own to deserve or challenge it, but intirely trust to and rely upon his Mercy and Goodness to give it: according to the Example of David, *Psal. 33. 22. Let thy merciful Kindness, O Lord, be upon us, like as we put our trust in thee.* And then to close up all, we are taught to say, *In thee, O Lord, have I trusted, let me never be confounded;* as David did, *Psal. 31. 1.*

This



This is the Sum and Sense of this pious Hymn, which we daily offer up unto the Lord, and is to be done with the most hearty and devout Affections.



## DISCOURSE XXXII.

PSAL. CXLVIII. 1, 2, &c.

O praise the Lord of Heaven, praise him in the Height, praise him all ye Angels of his, praise him all his Host, praise him Sun and Moon, &c.

THE second Hymn or Canticle prescrib'd after the first Lesson of Morning-Prayer, is the *Benedicite*, so call'd also from the first word of it, *Benedicite omnia opera Domini*, Bless ye the Lord, all his Works. 'Tis taken out of the 148th Psalm, wherein the principal parts of it are contain'd.

This Hymn is to be found in most of the antient Liturgies of the Church, as it is in ours (tho not so frequently used) to this day. It contains a Command or Summons issu'd out from God Almighty to the whole Creation, to do their Homage, and pay their Service to their great Creator. In treating whereof, I shall observe in the Hymn,

*First*, The Parties or Things to which this Summons is directed; and that is, to all the Creatures in general: O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord. And more particularly, to those that are after specify'd and recited.

*Secondly*, What they are call'd upon and commanded to do; and that is to *bless the Lord, to praise him, and magnify him for ever*: which is the Burden of this Song, and is apply'd to every part.

*Thirdly*, How or in what manner they may be said to do it; and that is, by administering Matter to Man for the founding forth his Praise: For all other Creatures wanting a Voice or Speech, are but silent Instruments of his Glory, and serve only to give occasion for it to Man, who is the alone vocal Herald and Trumpeter of his Praise.

First then, I say this Summons is directed to all the Creatures in general, who are call'd upon to pay their Homage and Duty to their great Creator: *Praise the Lord, all his Works.* And this is founded upon the Right of Creation, which intitles him to the Honour and Service of all the Works of his hand. *Hath not the Potter power over the Clay* (saith the Apostle) *which his own hands have made or form'd?* Undoubtedly he hath, and none may or can resist his Will. And this Right is confirm'd by another of Preservation, which gives him another Title to the Homage and Service of all his Creatures; they being all upheld and preserv'd by the same Hand that made them. He then having signify'd his Will to the whole Creation, and commanded all things in it, in their several ways, to set forth his Praise; he may very well expect Obedience from them, who are upon many accounts highly oblig'd to pay it. Indeed, the Excellency of all God's Works is such, that they do without an Interpreter shew forth the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of him that made them; which occasion'd the Psalmist's so often breaking forth into these or the like words: *O Lord, our Governour, how excellent is thy Name in all the World!*

But the Hymn descends to particulars, and begins, first, with the Top of the Creation, the holy Angels; *O ye Angels of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, &c.* Which they do not only by continual Hymns and Hallelujahs, but by their constant Readiness to execute the Will, and perform the Commands of their Maker: for which reason they are wont to be painted with Wings, to shew the Nimbleness and Celerity of their Obedience. This is express'd here in this Psalm, by *Praise ye him, all his Angels; praise him, all his Host:* ver. 2. Next,

The Heavens are call'd upon to praise the Lord; *O ye Heavens, bless ye the Lord, &c.* And these (as the Psalmist tells us) *declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handiwork:* Psal. 19. 1. And that so loudly, that there is no Speech nor Language, where their Voice is not heard: *their Sound is gone out into all Lands, and their Words unto the ends of the World.* Next,

The Waters that are above the Firmament are call'd upon to praise the Lord. What these Waters are, and how they are held there, since it is not reveal'd, we need not much enquire.

By the Powers of Heaven, which follow next, some understand the Angels mention'd before; others, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, mention'd just after, still'd the Heavenly Host; and these likewise are call'd upon to praise the Lord: which they do, by directing our Contemplations to the great Father of Light, who gives them all their Light, and guides all their Influences.

Below these, is the Atmosphere, or the airy Heavens, where the Vapours and Meteors of the Air are generated, and by which the Times and Seasons of the Year are measur'd: all which are likewise call'd upon to bless and magnify their Maker.

As first, *O ye Showers and Dew, bless ye the Lord*: which they do, by bidding us to look up to the Fountain of living Waters, from whence they flow: The falling of the Rain fattening the Earth for the Service of Man, and the distilling of the Dew minding us of the Dew of his heavenly Benediction, to which we owe our earthly Blessings; and both put us upon growing in Grace, and being fruitful in all good Works.

Next, *O ye Winds of God, bless ye the Lord*. And these by blowing where they list, bring to remembrance the Inspirations of God's Holy Spirit, and move us to magnify him, who cometh to us, *flying upon the wings of the Wind*.

After that, *O ye Fire and Heat, bless ye the Lord*: The burning of that, serves to inflame our Breasts with a celestial Fire towards God, and to kindle in us the Heat of Divine Love; which is the best, if not the only way of their magnifying of him.

Moreover, the Variety of Seasons are call'd upon to praise and magnify him that causeth them; and therefore the next words are, *O ye Winter and Summer, bless ye the Lord, &c.* The one minding us of the Winter of Age and Adversity, and thereby teaching us the Lessons of Patience and due Provision for them: the other, of the Summer and Sun-shine of Prosperity; and thereby prompting us to a suitable Joy, and due Improvement of it.

Again, the Variety of Weather is call'd upon to praise the Lord and magnify him for ever; and therefore the following words are, *O ye Dews and Frost, O ye Frost and Cold, O ye Ice and Snow, bless ye the Lord, &c.* Which they do, by leading us to consider both the Mercy and Justice of God in this Variety and Change of Weather. For sometimes he binds up the Earth with Frost and Snow,



to keep it the more warm within, that the Fruits of it may take the deeper root; and likewise binds up the Waters with Ice, for the better Nutriment and Preservation of the Fish: both which are tokens of Mercy and Goodness towards his Creatures. Sometimes again, these things by the Unseasonableness and long Continuance of them, become Acts of Justice to punish our Wantonness and Abuse of Plenty with Dearth and Scarcity. Which things are elegantly describ'd by the Psalmist, saying, *He giveth Snow like Wool, and scattereth the Flour: frost like ashes; he casteth forth his Ice like morsels: who is able to abide his Frost?* Again, *He sendeth out his Word, and melteth them; he bloweth with his Wind, and the Waters flow:* Psal. 147. 16, 17. Where he shews how these things answer the Ends of God's Providence, by promoting his Glory, and the Good of his People.

Furthermore, the Variety of Times are call'd upon to bless the Lord, as the next words of the Hymn declare: *O ye Nights and Days, together with the Effects of them, O ye Light and Darkness, praise him, and magnify him for ever.* So doth the constant Succession of Day and Night, which assigns to every one the Returns of Labour and Rest; *Man goeth forth to his Work and Labour until the Evening* (saith the Psalmist) and then *he giveth his beloved Sleep.* One Day telleth another, and one Night certifieth another; and both shew the Wisdom and Goodness of God, who maketh the Out-goings of the Morning and Evening to praise him. So also Light and Darkness are said to praise God; the one by displaying the Glory and Greatness of his Works, thereby causing us to admire and rejoice in him, and leading us to the Light of everlasting Life: the other, by working upon our Fear, thereby making us to shun the Deeds of Darkness here, and avoid the black Abyss of eternal Darkness hereafter. Finally,

The last things here call'd upon relating to the Heavens, are the Lightnings and the Clouds; *O ye Lightnings and Clouds, bless ye the Lord, praise him, and magnify him for ever.* And this they do, sometimes by being the Instruments of executing God's Wrath and Vengeance upon his Enemies, and sometimes by being the Means of conveying Mercy and Blessings upon his Church and People.

For the first, we read of God's *discomfiting* and destroying Armies with *Lightning*, 2 Sam. 23. 15. And the Psalmist

mist prays to him to cast forth his Lightning to scatter them, and his Arrows to consume them, Psal. 144. 6. For the latter, we read of the Clouds dropping Fatness by watering the Furrows of the Earth, and sending Rain into the little Valleys thereof; that the Ground is enrich'd out of the Treasury of the Clouds, which drop upon the Dwellings of the Wilderness, and the little Hills rejoice on every side, making the Earth soft with the Drops of Rain, and blessing the increase of it; so that it brings forth Fruit in due Season; and the Valleys stand forth thick with Corn, as to laugh and sing, Psal. 64.

Thus we see the First Rank of Creatures here summon'd to praise their Maker, viz. the Heavens, with all things contain'd therein, or belonging to the upper and lower Regions of it.

The Second Rank is the Earth, with all things upon, within, or under it; so the next words are, *O let the Earth bless the Lord; yea, let it praise him, and magnify him for ever.* And this it does by its Fruitfulness and Obedience, yielding its Fruits in their proper times, and being obedient to the Will and Commands of its Maker; which Fruits redound to the Praise and Glory of God, as well as the Comfort and Convenience of his Creatures. But because the Earth consists of several Parts, some whereof are animate or living Creatures, others inanimate or things without Life; the Hymn calls upon both in their several ways and measure to celebrate the Glory of their Creator: beginning with the inanimate Part, or the things without Life; and that is divided into the Land and Sea, with all things growing and rising in each. For the Land, the Hymn calls,

*1st, Upon the Mountains and Hills, the highest Parts of it, saying, O ye Mountains and Hills, bless ye the Lord, &c.* These by their Height help to elevate the Mind, and raise our Meditations up to Heaven: and therefore we find God himself thus bespeaking them; *Break forth into Singing, O ye Mountains and Forests, and every Tree therein; for the Lord hath redeem'd Jacob, and glorify'd himself in Israel: Isa. 44. 23.*

From the Mountains and Hills, the Hymn descends to the Meadows and Gardens, saying in the next words, *O all ye green things upon the Earth, bless ye the Lord, &c.* where the Grass and Herbs of the Field are summon'd to set forth the Glory of God; which they do by displaying the



the Wisdom, Power and Goodness of their Maker: which are all so visibly stamp'd upon them, that our Saviour sends the foolish and distrustful Persons to the Grass and Lillies of the Field; which, *tho' they neither toil, nor spin,* nor contribute any thing to the natural Gair and Bravery, in which they appear; yet Solomon, *in all his Glory, was not array'd like one of these.* Mat. 6. 28, 29.

Next, *The Wells and Springs* are call'd upon to praise the Lord: and this they do by affording Water for the Use of Man and Beasts, which being strain'd thro the Pores and Caverns of the Earth, become pure and wholesome Streams to refresh the City of God. *He sendeth the Springs into the Rivers* (saith the Psalmist) *which run among the Hills,* where all the Beasts of the Field drink thereof, and the wild Asses quench their Thirst; Psal. 104. 10, 11. And because all these Rivers run into the Sea, this Hymn leads our Meditations thither, saying, *O ye Seas and Floods praise ye the Lord, and magnify him for ever;* which they do, by shewing the Wonders of God in the Deep: There go the Ships to maintain Commerce and Correspondence with all Nations; and there is the Providence of God seen in setting Bounds to the Ocean, *that it cannot pass, nor turn again to cover the Earth:* which made the Psalmist cry out, *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works! in Wisdom hast thou made them all; the Earth is full of thy Riches.* Psal. 104. 24.

These are the Inanimate Creatures, or things without Life: Next follow the Animate, or living Creatures; which are likewise call'd upon to praise their Maker. And here the Hymn begins with the greatest and strongest of them all, saying, *O ye Whales, and all that move in the Waters, bless ye the Lord, &c.* The Whale is that great Leviathan that is said to take his Pastime in the Sea; and for its great Strength and Bulk, is the greatest Wonder of God in the Deep. Holy Job elegantly and largely describes the huge Parts and Powers of that vast Creature; and from thence takes occasion to magnify the infinite Power and Wisdom of God, who made and governs it; Job 41. This great Fish is said to glorify God, by obeying his Commands, and executing his Will: Thus, at his Command, a Whale swallowed up Jonah; and likewise at his Word render'd him alive again upon the Earth, as we read in the Book of Jonah. The Psalmist sets forth



the Power of God over this *Leviathan, and the Dragons in the Waters*, Psal. 74. and so doth *Isaiah*, chap. 27.

Next to the Fish of the Sea, the Fowls of the Air are called upon to praise the Lord; which they do by their continual Singing of his Praises; and this he is so delighted with, as to *hear their Cries*, and *feed the Ravens that call upon him*. Which made our Saviour to send doubting and carking Persons to the Fowls of the Air, who *neither sow nor reap, nor gather into Barns*; and yet your *Heavenly Father feedeth them*: Mat. 6. And holy *Job* doth the same, to learn their Duty and Dependence upon him; Job 12. 7.

To these are join'd the Beasts of the Field, in the next words; *O all ye Beasts and Cattel, bless ye the Lord, &c.* And this they do, by answering the End of their Creation, in being serviceable to the Use of Man, for which they were appointed. And therefore *Job*, in the fore-cited place, sends Men to learn from them to do the same; Chap. 12. 7, 8, 9.

And now after these Summons to all the Inanimate and Irrational Creatures, the last and highest Summons of all, is to the Children of Men; for whom all the rest were made, and to whom they are all subservient. And this Summons is in these words, *O ye Children of Men, bless ye the Lord, praise him, and magnify him for ever.*

Man was, above all other Creatures, made and design'd for the setting forth of God's Glory, and was therefore furnish'd with higher and nobler Faculties to that end; for God hath endow'd him with Reason and Understanding, to know and consider the Works of his Hand, when the rest are led on only by a natural Instinct, without any Knowledg or Consideration. Besides, God hath given Man a Tongue to speak of his Honour: and when others only silently administer Matter and Occasion, Man is the Herald to publish and proclaim his Glory.

And as Man was thus ordain'd and qualify'd, above other Creatures, for his Maker's Glory; so is he oblig'd far above any to promote it: for God hath subjected all other Creatures under his Feet, and given him the Dominion over all the Works of his Hand; he made him the Viceroy of the Universe, and invested him with Power to govern and direct all things in it to their proper Ends. And this is to be done by all Mankind, to whom these Creatures are subjected, and for whose use they were all design'd.

And

And here the *Israelites*, who were God's peculiar People, singled out and advanc'd above the rest of the World, are first call'd upon to praise him; saying, *O let Israel bless the Lord, &c.* And among them, first, *The Priests of the Lord*, who were set apart for this high and holy Employment. Next, the *Levites*, call'd in Scripture the *Servants of the Lord*, are summon'd to bless and praise him, and to celebrate the Honour of their Master.

After them, the *Spirits and Souls of the Righteous* are bid to magnify and adore the great Maker and Father of Spirits. To which are added, *all holy and humble Men of Heart*, who are call'd upon to exalt the Lord in their Thoughts, and to praise and magnify him for ever. In the Close of all, particular mention is made of three of the Children of Men, to wit, *Ananias, Azarias and Misael*; whose Names are mention'd in the Book of *Nehemiah*; and for their great Zeal in building the Temple, are call'd upon to promote the Honour and Service of God, perform'd in it: tho others take them for the three Children mention'd in *Daniel, Shadrack, Meseck, and Abednego*.

Thus we see the Drift and Design of this Divine Hymn, which is to summon all Creatures, and more especially Man, the Master-piece of all, to bless the Lord, by giving Thanks, and making a right Use of all his Blessings; to praise him in all our Words and Actions, and to magnify and extol him in all his wonderful Works. This is to be our Work and Happiness for ever in Heaven; and therefore we are to begin and prepare our selves for it here. To which end, we are taught to conclude all our Hymns and Psalms of Praise with that Heavenly Doxology, of

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever shall be, World without end. Amen.*



## DISCOURSE XXXIII.

2 TIM. III. 16, 17.

*All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness: That the Man of God may be perfect, thorowly furnished unto all good Works.*

**A**FTER the two Hymns that follow the first Lesson, the Church orders the Reading of the second Lesson, taken out of the New Testament, as the former was out of the Old. Which Choice (as a Father observes) was wisely made, to shew the Harmony and good Agreement between them; for the Law of *Moses* was but the Gospel fore-shew'd, and the Gospel of *Christ* is but the Law fulfill'd: that which lies in the Old Testament as under a Shadow, is in the New brought out into the open Sun; and what was only prefigur'd in the One, is perform'd in the Other. And this will lead us to consider the Authority and End of the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament; which I shall endeavour to do from these Words of our Text, *viz. All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, &c.* Where we may observe,

*First, The Divine Original or Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which are given by the Inspiration of God.*

*Secondly, The great Usefulness of them; they are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, and Instruction in Righteousness.*

*Thirdly, The End and Design of them; and that is, That the Man of God may be perfect, thorowly furnished unto all good Works.* I shall speak something to each of these, the better to recommend to us both the Reading and Hearing of the Holy Scriptures. And I begin,

*First,*



First, With the Divine Authority of them, which is plainly asserted in these words, *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God*: where by *All Scripture*, some understand only the Books of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, there being little more of Sacred Writ extant to that time. These were the Scriptures that our Saviour bid the Jews to search; that is, the Law and the Prophets; because they bore Testimony to him, *John 5. 39.* And these were the Scriptures, which in the Verse before the Text, *Timothy* is said to have known from a Child, being educated in the Knowledge of the Law and the Prophets from his Youth.

But because some of the Gospel is suppos'd to be written at that time, and the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles were extant soon after; *All Scripture* here may comprehend the whole Canon of Sacred Writ, or the Books contain'd in the Old and New Testament.

By their being given by the *Inspiration of God*, is meant their being written by the Direction and Dictates of his Holy Spirit, and deliver'd by Men assisted by the Holy Ghost; and so secur'd from all Errors and Mistakes in the Delivery of it. This *St. Peter* plainly testifies of the Prophets, *2. Pet. 1. 21.* *Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*; which he therefore styles, a sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed. And for the Apostles, he likewise declares, that they followed not any cunningly devised Fables, but deliver'd only the Oracles of God, and the Messages they receiv'd from him. They had the Spirit of God to guide them into all Truth; and being thus divinely inspir'd, deliver'd nothing but the infallible Dictates of the Holy Ghost.

But because whoever bears witness of himself, justly brings his Testimony into Suspicion; therefore neither the Prophets nor Apostles rely'd barely upon their own Word, but both of them brought that plain Evidence of a Divine Testimony, that no reasonable Person can gainsay or resist. They did not expect to be believ'd barely by saying that they came from God, and were sent to deliver his Mind to them; but shew'd that Divine Power of Miracles, which abundantly attested the Truth of what they deliver'd: they shew'd their Commission under the broad Seal of Heaven, that is confirm'd by those mighty and wonderful

Works, which none but God, or one assisted by his Divine Power, could do.

Thus *Moses* prov'd his Mission by many unimitable Miracles; which tho' the Magicians sought to imitate and elude by their Impostures, yet they acknowledg'd themselves to be out-done, and were forc'd to own the Finger of God in the Works of *Moses*, and to see the magical Arts and Illusions of the Devil in their own. The Prophets likewise demonstrated the Truth of their Messages by Miracles, and the fulfilling of Prophecies; and God by the Works of his Hands confirm'd the Words of their Mouth.

In the New Testament we find our Saviour appealing to his Miracles for the Truth of his Doctrine, saying, *If I do not the Works that Man never did or can do, believe me not; but if I do, believe me for the Works sake.* Hence *Nicodemus* own'd him to be a Teacher come from God, because none could do the Works that he did, except God were with him. His Apostles also after him did the same; inso-much that if any question'd, whether what they spake were the Word of God, they presently convinc'd them by raising some dead Person to Life again, by giving Sight to the Blind, Feet to the Lame; and by many other Miracles set the Faith of them that heard them beyond the reach of any just Doubt or Contradiction. For how can it be imagin'd, that the Power of God would so signally interpose to confirm a Doctrine as coming from him, which was none of his? or that he should set his Seal to any feign'd or forg'd Commission from him? Certainly the many Signs and wonderful Works with which God Almighty attested the Truth of what they deliver'd, may abundantly convince us, that they acted by his Power, and spake by his Holy Spirit; and consequently that the Holy Scriptures, written by them, were given by the Inspiration of God.

The Truth whereof is farther confirm'd to us by that universal Consent and Approbation that this Book hath found in the World ever since the first writing of it. All Times and Ages of the Christian Church have own'd it for the Word of God, and the Oracles of Divine Wisdom; and, by a continual and uninterrupted Succession, receiv'd it for the Measure and Standard of Divine Revelation: so that it must be great Presumption to call in question that which hath had the Belief and Entertainment of all

all Ages; which is to swim against the Current of all Time; and to set up our own Judgment against and above that of the whole World. Had the Holy Scriptures been otherwise than what they are taken for, *viz.* the Word of God; it must sure have been discover'd long before now; especially when so many sharp and piercing Wits have made it their business to find all the Flaws in them that Malice and Design could invent. But since all Endeavours of this kind have rather strengthen'd than shak'd the Belief of them, we have more reason to admire their Excellency; than to question their Authority; For being receiv'd as the Oracles of God, not only by the weaker and less-knowing Persons, but by all wise and good Men ever since their first Delivery; we may rationally conclude them to be (as the Apostle here tells us) *given by the Inspiration of God.*

But beside this, the Matters contain'd and deliver'd in the Holy Scriptures, farther confirm the Divine Authority of them: for we read there those sublime and excellent Truths, that are far above the Wit and Invention of Man; and yet so consonant to Reason, that he who considers them well, cannot but approve and admire them. What was said of St. Peter's Confession, may be as truly affirm'd of the Holy Scriptures; that *Flesh and Blood never reveal'd them unto us, but the Father which is in Heaven*; Mat. 16. 17. I might here urge the Ignorance and Simplicity of many of the Writers, and yet the High, Majestick, and Authoritative Stile in which they wrote; together with the wonderful Success and Prevalency they have had upon the Minds of Men. And lastly, I might add the miraculous Preservation of these Sacred Writings, and the great Providence of God in handing them down pure and uncorrupt thro so many Ages and Accidents of the World: But what I have said, I hope is sufficient to satisfy any Christian Auditory in the great Truth here deliver'd to us, that *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God.* From whence I proceed,

Secondly, To the exceeding great Benefit and Usefulness of them: *They are profitable for Doctrine*, to teach us Matters of Faith; *for Reproof*, in Cases of Vice and Immoralities; *for Correction*, in Matters of Errors and Heresies; and *Instruction in Righteousness*, as it relates to our Duty



Duty both to God and Man: Of each of these something briefly and distinctly.

And, (1.) The Holy Scriptures are profitable for Doctrine, or Direction in matters of Faith, teaching us what and how much we are to believe. God Almighty is the sole Lord of our Faith and Conscience: *There is one Law-giver* (saith St. James) *who is able to save and to destroy*, chap. 4. 12. He alone hath the power to prescribe Religion to us, and impose Articles of Faith upon us, which none else may presume or pretend to do; for we are bid to *call no man Master upon earth*; Mat. 23. 10. Not that we are to forbear the civil Title or Compellations of that kind in use among Men, but that we are not to make them Masters of our Faith, nor suffer them to impose new Articles of their own upon our Belief: for in that sense *we have but one Master, even Christ*, who is the sole Head and Governour of his Church, and hath the only Authority of prescribing to us in these matters. And as God is the sole Master of our Faith, so is the Holy Scripture the sole Rule and Measure of that Faith, which he hath given us; call'd therefore the *Form of Doctrine*, or *the Form of sound Words deliver'd to us*, and sometimes the *Analogy*, Proportion, and Measure of Faith. All which Expressions signify that the Holy Scriptures contain the Rule or Sum of those Doctrines, which we are bound to believe as necessary to Salvation; insomuch that we are to receive all that is deliver'd there, and no more: For in the Verse before the Text we are told, that the *Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto Salvation*. There is nothing defective or redundant in them, but they contain all that is sufficient to direct and bring us to Heaven: so that if an Angel from Heaven, or any Man upon Earth, teach any more or other Doctrines, than those we have receiv'd, we are commanded to account him *accursed*; Gal. 1. 8, 9. By which it appears, that the Holy Scriptures are a perfect Rule of Faith, and so are profitable unto us for Doctrine.

(2.) They are profitable for Reproof; that is, for the re-dargution or exposing of Vice and Immorality; and signify to us, that they are useful for the Discovery of the Nature and Evil of Sin. For Sin is describ'd to be *the Transgression of a Law*; and consequently the Law of God, shewing us what is good, and what is requir'd of us, manifests the contrary to be evil and forbidden to us: *I had not known Sin* (saith the Apostle) *but by the Law*; for *I had not known Lust*, except the Law had said, *Thou shalt not covet*:

count: Rom. 7. 7. *Rectum est index sui & obliqui*, the knowledge of a strait Line shews us a crooked one: and as the Knowledge of the Divine Law shews us what is right and consonant to it, so doth it discover what is wrong and dissonant from it; for *by the Law cometh the knowledge of Sin*, Rom. 3. 20. And,

As the Holy Scripture discovers the Nature, so doth it the Deformity and Danger of Sin. The Beauty and Comeliness of Vertue, as also the Uglinefs and Deformity of Vice, are both seen in the Glas of the Law. In the one, it represents the Image and Likeness of God, from whom it comes; in the other, it shews the Blackness and Portraiture of the Devil, who is the Father of it. Neither is the Danger of Sin less visible in it, than the Deformity of it; for in the Holy Scriptures *the Wrath of God is reveal'd against all Ungodliness of Men*. There we read the many Threats and Judgments of God denounc'd against it, how it incenses divine Justice, and turns even Mercy it self into Fury. And therefore our Saviour, who came to save the World, tells us, that he came to reprove the World of Sin, to turn them from it, and by shewing the Evil to prevent the Danger of it. He stiles the Acts of Sin, the *Works of Darknes*; and saith of the Sinner, that *he cometh not to the light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd*. And the Apostle bids us to *have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darknes*, but rather reprove them. All which make it evident, that the Holy Scriptures are profitable for Reproof.

(3.) They are profitable for the *Correction of Errors and Heresies*, which are contrary to Truth and sound Doctrine. The Word of God is the surest Test of Truth, and Trial of Error; and whatsoever is not found in it, or is condemn'd by it, is to be look'd upon as Hay or Stubble built upon the Foundation of Christianity, which cannot stand the trial. *To the Law, and to the Testimony* (saith the Prophet *Isaiah*) *if they speak not according to these, 'tis because there is no Truth in them*. Search the Scriptures (saith our Saviour) *for they contain the Words of Truth and eternal Life*. And if any publish a Doctrine not warranted by them, or repugnant to them, it is to be rejected for Error or Heresy. And therefore we find Christ and his Apostles often arguing with the *Jews* out of the Holy Scriptures, and from the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets confirming his own Doctrine, and confuting their Errors: *Te err* (saith

(saith he to the Sadduces) *not knowing the Scriptures*; Mat. 22. 29. And the ancient Fathers generally confuted the Errors and Heresies, that after sprung up in the Church, out of the Writings of Christ and the Apostles. The *Arians*, that deny'd the Deity of Christ; the *Eutychians*, that confounded his two Natures; the *Eunomians*, that deny'd the Divinity of the Holy Ghost; were all contested with and confuted out of the Holy Scriptures. And St. John bids us still *not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits, whether they be of God*: And that must be by the Touchstone of God's Word. All which shew it to be profitable for the Correction of Errors.

Lastly, The Holy Scriptures are profitable for *Instruction in Righteousness*: that is, they teach us our whole Duty in all Stations and Conditions, viz. the Duties of Piety and Devotion towards God, of Justice and Charity to our Neighbour, and of Temperance and Sobriety to our selves; which are Acts of Righteousness towards them all. Hence David calls the Word of God *a Light unto our Feet, and a Lanthorn to our Paths*; to direct us in the way that we should go, and to guide our steps in the paths that lead to everlasting Life. And this will lead

To the last thing in the Text, which is, The End and Design of all these things, viz. *That the Man of God may be perfect, thorowly furnish'd to all Good Works*. Where the *Man of God* is usually understood and interpreted of a Minister of God, a Teacher or Preacher of Righteousness. 'Tis a Term frequently given to the Prophets in the Old Testament, each of whom is there call'd *a Man of God*, or a Messenger sent by him, to deliver his Mind or Message to the World. And these are to be perfect, that is, fully endow'd with Knowledge and Understanding, that they may be able to teach and instruct others in their Duty: *And thorowly furnish'd to all good Works*; that is, well accomplish'd for the skilful and faithful Discharge of all parts of their Office: to which end, the Holy Scriptures were indicted and given by Inspiration of God, and are still useful to instruct Mankind in the Precepts of a holy Life, and to build them up in their most holy Faith.

But because this Term of *Man of God*, is no where else in the New Testament used or apply'd only to the Ministers of God, it may perhaps be taken more largely, and extend to all Men, who are the Creatures and Servants of  
God;



God; to whom likewise the Holy Scriptures are highly serviceable for all the Ends of Edification and Religion, and are able to make both Minister and People wise and *salvations*.

Thus we see the Divine Authority, the Usefulness, and the End of the Holy Scriptures: The Use I shall make of it, shall be,

1<sup>st</sup>, To exhort you to the frequent Reading, Hearing, and Study of these Sacred Writings. Our Value and Esteem of Books is commonly measur'd by the Worth and Wisdom of the Author; and can any upon that score lay a juster Claim to our Study and Veneration, than the Book of God himself, in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg? We find the Royal Psalmist greatly admiring the Wisdom and Perfection of God's Word, saying, *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth Wisdom to the Simple: The Statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the Heart; the Precepts of the Lord are pure, and give light unto the Eyes; more to be desired are they than Gold, yea than fine Gold, sweeter also than Honey and the Honey-Comb: Psal. 19. 7, 8.* His Delight in it was so great, that he labours hard to express it: *O how I love thy Law! (saith he) 'tis my Meditation all the day; Psal. 119.*

2<sup>dly</sup>, This Discourse may serve to check the profane Neglect and Contempt of this Divine Book. There are some who wholly lay it aside, and seldom or never look into it, preferring Plays, and the Froth of Mens Brains before these lively Oracles. There are others who peruse them only to pick out matter for Jest, and to make them the Subject of their Contempt and Raillery: but let such vile Miscreants know, that they shall shortly be judg'd by that Book, which they now so impiously despise. And they who refuse the Blessings tender'd to them in it, shall e'er long find all the Curses written in that Book heap'd for ever on their heads. Wherefore let us amend this Folly in time, and let the Word of God dwell in us richly in all Wisdom: Let us delight in reading and hearing the Holy Scriptures, and make the Word of God the Subject of our daily Study and Meditation; so shall we be furnish'd to all good Works, and shall e'er long receive the Wages of them, even eternal Life: Which God grant, &c.

## DISCOURSE XXXIV.

St. LUKE I. 68, 69, &amp;c.

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his People, and hath raised up an Horn of Salvation for us in the House of his Servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets, &c.*

**A**FTER the Second Lesson, two Hymns are likewise appointed to be said or sung, as there were after the first. And these are the *Benedictus* and *Jubilate*, both so call'd from the first words with which they begin. And being very proper and pertinent to the Occasion of the approaching Festival of *Christmas*, wherein we are to remember the Birth and Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour; I shall speak particularly to them, and shall treat at this time of the first of these Hymns, beginning with these words, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, &c.*

The Words are the Song of *Zacharias*, the first Prophet of the New Testament, who being stricken with Dumbness for not believing the Message of the Angel, after nine months silence coming to Speech, brake forth into this sacred Hymn of Joy and Thanksgiving for the Mercy vouchsafed to him: In which Blessing and Praise is given to God for two things.

*First*, For procuring of Man's Redemption, with the Salvation that follows it; express'd here by visiting and redeeming his People. And,

*Secondly*, For the publishing and actual conferring of it, of which we read in the following part of the Hymn.

*First*, I say, Blessings and Praises are here given to God for procuring and compleating the Work of Man's Redemption, in these words; *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeem'd his People, &c.* Where

we have the Authority, the Nature, and the End of this Redemption.

For the Author of our Redemption, that is God, express'd here in the Style of the Old Testament, by the name of the Lord God of Israel. So he is call'd in Gen. 9. Psal. 44. 13. and many other places; where for espousing the Cause of the Israelites, and taking them for his peculiar People, he is lov'd and bless'd by the name of the Lord God of Israel: which Phrase may be still used by Christians; who are in the New Testament likewise call'd the Israel of God, Gal. 6. 16. He it is, that is here said to visit and redeem his People; which he did by sending his Son to take our Nature upon him, and therein to pay a Ransom for our Sins. By his being made Flesh, and dwelling among us, he is said to visit us with his Salvation; and by laying down a valuable Price and Consideration, he is said to redeem his People. And here it will be requisite to consider, as this Hymn directs us, both the Nature of this Redemption, and the Manner of revealing it.

For the Nature of it, we are to take notice of a three-fold Redemption.

1<sup>st</sup>, A Temporal Redemption of the Body from Slavery and Bondage to earthly Enemies, such as Tyrants and Oppressors. Of this kind was the Deliverance of the Israelites from the Bondage of Egypt, where they groan'd under the Tyranny of Pharaoh, and the Oppression of cruel Task-masters, till God was pleas'd to visit their Enemies with the Rod, and them with his Loving-kindness; of which they were charg'd to be ever mindful, and still to bless God for thus visiting and redeeming his People.

2<sup>dly</sup>, There is a Spiritual Redemption of the Soul from Bondage to ghostly Enemies, such as Sin, Satan, and the Curse of the Law. And as these spiritual Enemies of our Soul are far worse, and do us much more mischief than the temporal Enemies of our Bodies; so is our Redemption from the former much greater than that of the latter. Sin is a greater Tyrant than Pharaoh, and imposes harder Tasks and heavier Burdens than the Egyptian Task-masters. Satan is the worst of all Enemies, and the Curse of the Law dooms us to the Miseries of both. In this condition God was pleas'd to visit us, to look upon and pity our Distress, and sent his Son to make such a Visit to us, as rescu'd us from the power of all our Enemies: for he hath destroy'd the Dominion of Sin in us, and freed us from the Tyranny



Tyranny of Satan, and redeem'd us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us: for which we can never be enough thankful. There is an eternal Redemption both of Body and Soul from the Powers of Death and Hell, to which we were likewise in bondage. Christ by dying hath pluck'd out the Sting of Death, and by rising again hath rescu'd us from the Power of the Grave: so that this King of Terrors, is now vanquish'd and subdu'd under our feet; tho' it may seize, it cannot hold our mortal Bodies: for Christ through Death hath destroy'd him that had the power of Death, that is, the Devil; and hath deliver'd them, who through Fear of Death were all their life-time subject to Bondage: Heb. 2. 14, 15. In a word, he hath trodden down all his and our Enemies, and made them all his Foot-stool, thereby obtaining eternal Redemption for us; which may make us all say with Zachary, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeem'd his People.

But this is not all: for as the Israelites were not only deliver'd from the Miseries and Thralldom of Egypt, but were put into the possession of the fruitful and happy Land of Canaan; so the Redemption here mention'd implies not only our being deliver'd from the Miseries of Death and Hell, but the inslating us into the Joys and Happiness of Heaven. And this is the mighty Salvation, which in the next words is said to be rais'd up for us in the House of his Servant David. The Deliverance of the Israelites from the Bondage of Egypt is in Scripture call'd a mighty Salvation, because it was effected for them by the mighty Hand of God; for which they were call'd upon to adore the Power, as well as the Mercy of the Deliverer. But that was but a Type of our Deliverance by Jesus Christ, from the worse Bondage we were in to our spiritual Enemies; which is a much more mighty Salvation than the former, whether we consider the far greater Miseries we are freed from, or the much greater Happiness we are advanc'd to by it: and therefore requires our greater Gratitude, and higher Acts of Adoration both of his Power and Goodness towards us.

But what is here call'd a mighty Salvation, is in the new Translation term'd a Horn of Salvation, to signify, first, the great Power and Might by which it was effected: The Strength of a Beast lying in its Horns, hath made the Horn an Emblem of Power and Strength. So the cutting off the

*Horn of Israel*, was the taking away their Strength; and the *lifting up the Horn of their Adversaries*, was the making them strong and powerful, as we read, *Lam. 2. 13, 17.* And so the *Horn of Salvation* is the same with a strong and mighty Salvation.

Moreover, *Horn* in Scripture is set to signify Honour and Glory: so the *lifting up the Horn*, implies the exalting to Honour and Triumph; and here it denotes that princely Authority, to which the Son of God was advanc'd, being made a Prince and a Saviour to save and deliver his People. And this *Horn of Salvation* is said to be rais'd in the *House of his Servant David*; that is, he should come from the Stock and Lineage of *David*; according to that Prophecy of his, *That of the fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, God would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne: Psal. 132. 11. and Acts 2. 30.* And this is that invaluable Mercy that *Zachary* here blesses God for.

The Truth whereof is abundantly confirm'd to us by all the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*. So he here tells us in the next words, that God spake of this by the mouth of his holy Prophets, which have been since the *World began*. He spake it in the beginning of the *World* to our first Father *Adam*, saying, *Gen. 3. 15. The Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's head*: meaning, that one born of a Woman should destroy the Power of the Devil, that first beguil'd us. The same was after spoken to our Father *Abraham*, *Gen. 18. 18.* that in his Seed should all the Nations of the Earth be blessed. The like was deliver'd to *Moses*, saying, *A Prophet shall the Lord thy God raise up unto thee, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken: Deut. 18. 15.* Yea, we read, that all the Prophets from *Samuel*, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have with one mouth foretold of these days; *Acts 2. 24.* in which we should be saved from our Enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us: that is, from all spiritual Enemies that seek our Ruin, and likewise from all temporal Enemies that bear us ill-will.

Furthermore, this great Truth is confirm'd to us by Promise as well as Prophecy; to perform the Mercy promised to our Forefathers, and to remember his holy Covenant. 'Twas promis'd to *David* as a publick Blessing, *Jer. 23. 5. The Days will come (saith the Lord) that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and he shall execute Judgment and Justice upon earth:*

*In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell in safety. And this is the Name by which he shall be call'd,*  
**THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;** ver. 6.

This Promise was ratify'd to *Abraham* by an Oath; and because God could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, *In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee.* Wherein God willing (saith the Apostle) more abundantly to shew to the *Heirs of Promise* the Immutability of his Counsel, confirm'd it by an Oath; that by two immutable things, viz. his Promise and his Oath, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have the stronger Assurance and Consolation; Heb. 6. 17, 18. So that the Truth and Faithfulness of God are engag'd to perform the Promise made to our Forefather *David*, and to perform the Oath which he swore to our Forefather *Abraham*, and to remember the Covenant made to their Seed for evermore.

But what was the End and Design of all this? Why, that the next words of the Hymn will tell us: it was, *That we bring deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, might serve him without fear, in Holiness and Righteousness before him, all the days of our life.* Where the foregoing Redemption and Salvation are suppos'd and taken for granted, by which we are deliver'd out of the hand of our Enemies; and they (as we have seen) are both spiritual and temporal. Of the first sort are,

Our Deliverance from Sin by the power of divine Grace, so that it shall no longer reign in our mortal Bodies.

From Satan, by the Assistance of his Holy Spirit; so that he is no farther able to force or compel us by any of his Temptations.

From the Law, by Christ's perfect Obedience and Submission to it; so that we are no longer liable to the Rigour or Curse of it.

From Death, by his laying down his Life for us; so that we are freed from the Sting of Death, and by his Resurrection gain'd the Victory of the Grave.

And lastly, From Hell, by our Saviour's Descent into it; whereby we are freed from its Torments, and secur'd from falling at last into that Gulph of Perdition. These are the ghostly or spiritual Enemies, from which we are here suppos'd to be deliver'd.

The temporal are, all corporal Enemies, that seek to annoy or destroy our Bodies; from which likewise, by the

I do good



good Providence of God we are deliver'd from all final hurt or damage they can do us.

The End or Inference from both is, to be encourag'd from thence to do him the more faithful and chearful Service.

As, (1.) to serve him without Fear; not without a filial Fear of offending so good a Father, or displeasing so gracious a Master, for such a Fear is requir'd and expected from us, *Mal. 1. 6.* but without a servile base Fear of God, as a Tyrant or hard Master, that expects to reap where he hath not sowed, and to gather where he hath not sowed. We are to serve God not as Slaves for fear of the Lash, but as Sons and Servants, from a Principle of Love and Duty; doing all things not by Constraint, but willingly and of a ready mind. We owe him Homage and Service, as we are his Creatures; but we owe him a more hearty, liberal, and ingenuous Service, as we are his Redeemed ones: upon which account we may say with the Apostle, *We have not receiv'd the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but we have receiv'd the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.*

(2.) We are to serve God in Holiness, that is, with a pure and holy Mind. The Service we pay him must proceed, not from any sinister or secular Ends, such as the Praise of Men, or the promoting of any worldly Interest, for that is to serve our selves more than God; but it must be done in Sincerity and Singleness of Heart, from a Sense of his Greatness, and our Obligations to him. This is to serve him with a perfect and true Heart, and to obey him faithfully with all our power; and to this the Psalmist often invites us, saying, *O serve the Lord, all ye his Saints, worship the Lord with holy Worship.*

(3.) We are to serve the Lord in Righteousness. This respects our Duty to our Neighbour: which must be done in all Justice and Honesty, not defrauding or over-reaching our Brother in any matter, nor taking away or withholding any thing that is his; but giving to every one their due without fraud or subtraction, dealing justly and uprightly with all Men, and doing to others as we would be done by our selves. This is the Golden Rule to square and govern our Actions by, and will bring the Blessing of God upon those that act by it.

(4.) We are to serve God constantly, *all the days of our life*; not fainting or tiring in his Service, but holding out

to the end. And indeed, the Greatness of our Redemption may sufficiently oblige us so to do. He that hath been bought or redeem'd out of *Turkish* Slavery, will think himself bound to serve his Redeemer all the days of his life; he will think nothing too much to be done for such a Friend and Deliverer. But how much more faithfully are we to serve our dear Redeemer, who hath rescu'd us from a far worse than a *Turkish* or *Egyptian* Bondage; and that too, at the invaluable Price of his own most precious Blood? Nothing sure that we can say or do, can be any Compensation for such a Favour: And therefore we may very well devote unto him our whole Man, and serve him truly all the days of our Life.

This is the first Part of this sacred Hymn, viz. the Recovery or Redemption of Mankind, together with the Manner and End of it.

The second Part is, The Discovery or Revelation of this great Blessing to the World, which takes up the following part of this Song, and begins with these words: *And thou, Child, shalt be call'd the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways, &c.* Where old *Zachary* turns his Discourse from the Son of God to his own Son *John*, and prophetically declares great things of him. He that had scarce Faith enough to believe he should have a Son, had now Assurance enough to foretel his being the Herald to proclaim the Son of God, and his Harbinger to prepare his way, and the Usher to go before his face, and bring him into the World. And so it came to pass; for *John* was the Morning-Star to this Sun of Righteousness, the Messenger that went before his face, and came in the Power and Spirit of *Elias*, to turn the Hearts of the Fathers unto their Children, and the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just. The Prophet *Isaiah* stiles him, *The Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path strait.* And this he did by preaching the Doctrine of Repentance, saying, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; Mat. 3. 2, 3. By this he gave knowledg of Salvation unto his People, for the Remission of their Sins. That Salvation which was wrapt up in Clouds, and but obscurely reveal'd before, was brought into a clearer light by his Appearance; and the Remission of Sin, that was only shadow'd out in dark Types and Sacrifices, was more plainly manifested and publish'd to the World:

World: for St. John usher'd in our Saviour as a Sacrifice of Atonement and Reconciliation with God; pointing at him, and saying, *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sin of the World!* meaning, that this is he, who is to make our Peace with God, and by the Sacrifice of his Death bring us to everlasting Life.

And all this was done, not for any Worth or Merit of ours, but merely thro the tender Mercy of our God; whose Bowels yearn'd towards us, when we had no Pity or Power to help our selves. For when we lay in Darkness and the Shadow of Death, this Day-spring from on high was pleased to visit us; that is, the Son of God left his Throne in Heaven, to come down to succour and relieve us here on earth. And this he did, by taking our Nature, that he might therein make Atonement for our Sin, and by the Price of his own Blood obtain eternal Redemption for us. In short, this Sun of Righteousness arose, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of Peace: that is, to give the Light of Truth to them that are in the Darkness of Error, and the Light of eternal Life to them that sit in the shadow of Death; and by both to guide their feet into the ways of Peace, that they may not wander and perish in the Paths of Destruction.

This is briefly the Sum of this excellent Hymn, which teaches us to bless God, not only for working out Redemption for us, but likewise for revealing, publishing, and applying it to us. This, we see, was first done by John the Baptist, who was an extraordinary Messenger, inspir'd and employ'd by God for this purpose; being the Forerunner of the *Messias*, to alarm the World with the News of his Approach, to declare the End of his Coming, and to make his way ready into our Hearts. And the same is still done by the Ministers and Ambassadors of Christ, who bring to you the Glad-tidings of the Gospel, and preach Peace and Redemption for the Remission of Sins.

The Use that I shall make of this Discourse, shall be, 1<sup>st</sup>, To exhort you often to meditate upon, and to thank God for this inestimable Blessing of Man's Redemption, whereby we are bought out of the hands of our Enemies, and restor'd to the Liberties and Privileges of the Sons of God: Mercies that we can never be enough sensible of, or thankful for. And therefore we should set a high value



upon them; and make a right use of them; especially considering, how dear it cost our Saviour to purchase them for us.

2dly, Let us always remember this signal and unspeakable Mercy of the Redemption, especially at the approaching Festival, when we are to celebrate the Birth-day of our Redeemer. The *Israelites* were commanded never to forget their Deliverance out of *Egypt*; but to keep the great Goodness of God in remembrance: How much more ought we to preserve the Memory of a far more glorious Deliverance from all the Powers of Death and Hell, and that too by the Death of our Deliverer? Whom we are therefore to remember in the way of his own appointment; namely, in the Feast of the Lord's Supper, where he seals our Pardon in his own Blood, and conveys to us all the Benefits of our Redemption: and how can we escape, if we slight or neglect so great Salvation?



## DISCOURSE XXXV.

PSAL. C. 1, 2, &c.

*O be joyful in the Lord, all ye Lands; serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before his Presence with a Song. Be ye sure that the Lord he is God, &c.*

**T**HIS is a Psalm of Praise, and is the second Hymn appointed to be said or sung after the second Lesson, and shews how both the Old Testament and the New concur in stirring us up to praise God. This Hymn is stil'd *Jubilate*, as we before observ'd from the first words, *O be joyful*, with which it begins.

The Psalm consists of a double Exhortation. The

*First*, To Joy and Rejoicing, with the proper Motives to excite and encourage us thereunto, in the two first Verses. The

*Second*,

*Secondly*, To Thanksgiving and Praise, with the suitable Arguments and Motives to promote that, in the two next Verses. Of which particularly,

And, *First*, Of the Exhortation to Joy, in these words, *O be joyful in the Lord all ye Lands, &c.* Joy is a Passion of the Soul, that is better felt than describ'd, and is so well known by the Effects of it, as to need no Description. Philosophers define it, to be the dilating and cheering of the Heart, upon the apprehending or embracing an agreeable Object. Grief and Sorrow are known to contract the Heart, to depress the Spirits, and to darken the Countenance; but Joy opens and enlarges the Soul, raises the Spirits, and puts Life and Light into the Countenance: And this is the best and fittest Disposition of the Soul, for all the business both of this Life and the next. For which reason the Psalmist often calls for it, and seeks to excite it in us in the Service of God.

But the Joy here exhorted to, is not the trifling, transitory Mirth and Jollity of the World, which the Wiseman compares to *the crackling of Thorns under a Pot*, for making an empty Noise that soon ceases, and a short Blaze that quickly goes out, *Eccles. 7. 6.* But the Joy here call'd for, is a spiritual Joy and Rejoicing in God, *O be joyful in the Lord*; that is, in the sense of his Love, and remembrance of his Goodness, which is a more permanent and substantial Joy, and is sufficient to carry us with Comfort thro' all the Stages of human Life. To this the Apostle excites all good Christians, saying, *Rejoice in the Lord always*, *Phil. 4. 4.* And lest their Spirits should at any time sink under the pressures of Adversity, he repeats it again to raise them, *And again, I say rejoice.* To this we find the Psalmist exciting us upon all occasions, and particularly here in the Text, *O be joyful in the Lord*: to which he adds the Persons call'd to this Joy, and that is, *all ye Lands*; together with the time when this Joy is to be express'd, and that is, in serving of God: *Serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before his Presence with a Song.* For the Persons call'd upon to be joyful in the Lord, they are all Lands and Nations, who are all to rejoice in God their Maker and Preserver; for the Sound of his Works, both of Creation and Providence, is *gone out into all Lands, and their Words unto the ends of the World*, as we read, *Psal. 19. 4. & Rom. 10. 18.* Yea, the great Blessing of

Redemption is in some measure extended to them : for our Saviour was promis'd the *Heathens* for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for his Possession, and that all Nations should see the Salvation of God : and therefore all Lands and Nations may be call'd upon to rejoice in a Blessing, in which all Mankind is concern'd. And this is more especially to be done by the Christian World, who are arriv'd to the knowledg, and made Partakers of this inestimable Blessing. For which reason we of these Nations, to whom this Salvation is clearly reveal'd and tender'd, ought to be more joyful in the Lord than many others, who are not so fully instructed in it : *He hath not dealt so with every Nation* (saith the Psalmist) *neither have the Heathens the knowledg of his Laws.* They are many of them left to the blind uncertain Conduct of natural Light in these Matters ; whereas we have a better Insight into them, by the Light of Divine Revelation : and therefore our Joy should be more full, frequent and lasting. Then

For the times of expressing this Joy, tho that, by the Apostle's Direction, should be at all times, *Rejoice in the Lord always* ; there being Comfort enough in the favour of God, to afford a continual delight in him, whatever may betide us in the World : yet the Psalmist here would have this Joy in the Lord most chiefly shew'd in his Worship and Service, saying in the next words, *Serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before his Presence with a Song* ; meaning, that we should place our greatest Delight in serving God, and make all our Addresses to him with Acts of Joy. The foregoing Hymn taught us to serve the Lord *without Fear* ; this teaches us to serve him *with Gladness*. Being deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, we are rescu'd from the vile Condition of Slaves, and so may banish all Fear in his Service ; and being the redeem'd ones of Christ, we receive the Adoption of Sons, and so may serve him with Chearfulness and Delight.

And indeed 'tis with such Services only that God is well pleas'd ; he hates those unwilling Sacrifices that must be drag'd to the Altar, and delights only in Free-will Offerings. He loveth a chearful Giver ; that is, one that gives him a free, voluntary and ingenuous Service, not a forc'd extorted Obedience ; being drawn to his Duty by the cords of Love, and not by the motives of Fear and Compulsion : In a word, one that can say with our Saviour,

viour,



viour, *I delight to do thy Will, O God; yea thy Law is within my Heart.* This is to serve the Lord with Gladness, which inward Gladness of the Heart is to be express'd by outward Songs of Praise in the Mouth: so the next words direct us, *To come before his Presence with a Song.*

Singing, you know, is a token of Joy and Chearfulness, and is therefore, in the Book of God, often call'd for and expected in his Service: *Sing Praises unto the Lord* (saith the Psalmist) *Oh sing Praises unto his Name!* and upon every new occasion his Call is, *Sing unto the Lord a new Song, yea, sing lustily unto him with a good Courage.* So that Songs of Praise are a great part of religious Worship, and that not only under the Old Testament (as some vainly object) but likewise under the New: For St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians, to *speak to one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, making melody in your Hearts unto the Lord;* Eph. 5. 19. And the same Advice is given to the Colossians, chap. 3. 16. and this is to be done when we come before his Presence, which we are to enter with a Song, or the Voice of Melody, and never to come before him but with Acts of Joy and Rejoicing. When Worldlings rejoice in their worldly Goods, we are bid to rejoice in the Lord; when they say, *Who will shew us any Good?* we are to say with David, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us,* and that will put more Gladness into our Hearts, than when their *Corn, and Wine, and Oil increaseth;* Psal. 4. 6, 7, 8.

The working in us this spiritual Joy and Gladness, is the main drift and design of this Psalm; to which are added, two great Motives and Encouragements, in the following words:

The one taken from the Nature of God whom we serve.

The other from his Goodness, or the great things he hath done for us.

For the (1.) The Nature and Greatness of God is set forth in those words, *Be ye sure that the Lord he is God;* that is, he is the only true God, in opposition to the false Idol Gods of the Heathen; and he is the only great and mighty God, in opposition to all other feeble and impotent Deities. The Gods of the Heathens were but Idols, made of Silver and Gold, the Works of Mens hands; they serv'd vain Gods, and fell down to graven Images, that had neither life nor help in them: *They had eyes, and saw not; ears, and heard not, neither spake they thro' their throat;*

through: they that made them were like unto them, and so are all they that put their trust in them; as the Psalmist upbraids them, *Psal. i 15*, so that they had little reason to rely upon or rejoice in such Deities.

But be sure (saith the Psalmist) that the Lord, whom we serve, he is God; make no doubt of it, but rest assured, that he is the great, the mighty, and the only true God. Tell it out among the Heathen (saith he) that the Lord is King, that he is great, and cannot worthily be praised; and that he is far above all Gods, for he hath all power in Heaven and Earth, and can do whatever pleaseth him: and therefore we may well rejoice in him, serving him with Gladness, and coming before his Presence with Singing. The Lord is King, the Earth may be glad thereof; yea, the multitude of the Isles may rejoice thereat: for among the Gods there is none like unto him, there is none can do as he doth. Sing ye therefore merrily unto the Lord our Strength, make a cheerful noise unto the God of our Salvation: Take the Psalm, bring hither the Tabret, the merry Lute and the Harp; for this God is our God for ever, he shall be our Guide unto Death. This is what the Spirit of God calls us to, and this may very well raise our Spirits, and make us to be joyful and glad in him.

But besides the Greatness and Excellency of his Nature, his great Mercy and Goodness to his Creatures may afford abundant matter of Joy and Rejoicing in him. To this purpose the Psalmist here instances in the two great Works of Creation and Providence: The one, in these words, *It is he that hath made us, and not we our selves*: The other, in these, *We are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture*. Both which should fill our Hearts with Joy, and our Mouths with his Praise.

And, 1. Because he is our Maker, *It is he that hath made us, and not we our selves*. He made the World, and all things in it by the breath of his mouth; he only said, let them be, and they presently were; he spake the word, and they were created: But he not only made Man as the other Creatures, but he made him Lord and Master of all the Works of his hand. And what infinite reason have we to serve him with Gladness, and rejoice before him with a Song? *It is he that hath made us, and not we our selves*: we contributed nothing to our own Being, and had neither head nor hand in making our selves; he made us out of nothing, and sure there could be no power or merit

in nothing. He created us by his own Power, and formed us of his own Good will and Pleasure. A Heathen would say, *We are his Offspring*; Acts 17:28. And the Apostle teaches us to say in the same Chapter, that *in him we live, move, and have our Being*; and that *he giveth us Life, and Breath, and all things*; Ver. 25, 28. And as he made us by his Power, so doth he daily new-make and renew our Being by his Providence. It is he that doth feed us, and not we our selves; *we are the Sheep of his Pasture*; as well as the Work of his Hand. *The Lord is my Shepherd* (saith David) *therefore shall I lack nothing*; he shall feed me in a green Pasture, and lead me forth beside the Waters of Comfort: and therefore (saith he) *I will fear no Evil, for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff comfort me. Thy Loving-kindness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my Life, and I will dwell in thy House for ever.* Psal. 23.

Besides, we are here said to be his People, as well as the Sheep of his Pasture. *We are his People*, not by Creation only, but by Redemption and Regeneration; by which we become a People in Covenant with him, he being our God; and we his peculiar People. So we find God himself comforting the Israelites; Isa. 43. 1. saying to Jacob, *I have created thee; to Israel, I have redeem'd thee, and call'd thee by thy Name, thou art mine*; and therefore bids them fear not, but to rejoice and be exceeding glad. This is the first part of this Hymn, viz. An Exhortation to Joy and Rejoicing in God.

The Second is like unto it; to wit, An Exhortation to Thanksgiving and Praise, in the next words: *O enter then into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise; be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.* Where we may observe,

1<sup>st</sup>. A Call to Thanksgiving and Praise.

2<sup>ly</sup>. The Place where it is to be offer'd, and that is within the Gates of the Temple, and the Courts of God's House. And,

3<sup>ly</sup>. The Manner of performing it, which is with the inward Thankfulness of the Heart, and the outward Expressions of the Tongue, by speaking good of his Name; Of which briefly.

For the 1<sup>st</sup>. The Calls to Thanksgiving and Praise are so numerous and frequent in Holy Scripture, that 'twill be needless



needless as well as endless to recite them. The Book of Psalms every where abounds with them; *O praise the Lord, and give Thanks unto his Name*, being the burden of almost every Psalm. The Hymns of the New Testament strike upon the same string; and *giving Thanks always for all things*, is the frequent Language of St. Paul's Epistles. Indeed Gratitude is a piece of natural Justice, to be paid by all Men at all times; for every benefit we daily and hourly receive lies as a Debt upon us, and Thanksgiving is the most reasonable way of discharging it: and Praise is a Tribute due to the Greatness and Goodness of our Maker, which we all stand oblig'd continually to pay; which is the reason of the frequent Calls and Summons to it.

But the Psalmist points here at the Place where these publick Duties are to be perform'd, of which we are to take notice; and they are the Gates of the Temple, and the Courts of God's House: *O go your way into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise*. Which terms relate to the Gates and Courts of the Temple, that led up to the Altar, where the Jewish Sacrifices were offer'd; and they give us to understand, that the publick Sacrifices of Praise and Thanksgivings are to be offer'd up in the Church or House of God, set apart and consecrated for that purpose. *God's House is a House of Praise*, as well as *Prayer unto all Nations*; for thither the Tribes went up, even the Tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, and to give Thanks unto the name of the Lord. And we find David expressing his Joy at it: *I was glad (saith he) when they said unto me, Come let us go into the House of God, our Feet shall stand in thy Gates, O Jerusalem! Psal. 122*. And we are still to praise God in the publick Assemblies of his Saints, where he hath promis'd to meet and to bless us; not in the private Conventicles of Sectaries, where Seducers meet to beguile unstable Souls.

But how are the Duties of Thanksgiving and Praise to be perform'd? Why! that is held forth in the next words, *Be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name*. Where the inward Thankfulness of the Mind is to accompany the outward Expressions of the Mouth, by the one thinking, and by the other speaking good of his Name. By both we are to celebrate his Bounty, and give him the Glory of all that we receive; saying, upon all occasions, with holy David, *Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy Name be all the Praise*: And with the Church in the

*Revelation,*

Revelation, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Honour, and Praise, and Glory; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. To all which we are mov'd by three Arguments in the close.

The one taken from the merciful Nature and Disposition of God, for the Lord is gracious, so hath he declar'd himself; for when he proclaim'd his Name to the Israelites, it was the Lord gracious and merciful, abundant in Goodness and Truth: and we find the truth of it by daily experience; for we entirely subsist upon his Bounty, and depend every minute upon his Succour. In our daily Food we taste and see that the Lord is gracious; in the Raiment we put on we feel the warmth of his Loving-kindness; and there is not a danger we escape, but proceeds from the watchful Eye of his good Providence.

(2.) His Mercy is everlasting, and his Compassions fail not; his Kindness is not short and transitory, by fits and starts, but permanent and lasting; he waits to be gracious, and takes all opportunities of extending his Mercy and Favour to us. This David acknowledges and repeats in the 136th Psalm; making these words, *His Mercy endureth for ever*, the burden of the whole Psalm.

And, Lastly, His Truth endureth from Generation to Generation: tho Heaven and Earth may pass away, yet not one jot or tittle of his Word shall fail; for he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever: which may make us conclude this, as all other Hymns, with *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, &c.*

And now from these Calls to Joy and Thanksgiving, we may learn, that the Service of God is to be perform'd, not with pensive Looks, dejected Countenances, and mournful Accents, but with a more pleasant air of Chearfulness and Rejoicing. 'Tis a dishonour to God to come into his Presence with drooping and down-cast Faces, as if he were a hard Master, that impos'd nothing but heavy and burdensom Tasks: And 'tis a disparagement to Religion to hang down our heads like a Bullrush, as if it were a sour sullen thing, that dooms us to an absurd and perpetual melancholy. But the Psalmist here bids us, to *serve the Lord with gladness, and to come into his Presence with a Song*: And the Apostle calls upon us, to *rejoice in the Lord always*. And this is more especially to be done at the approaching Festival, when we are to keep the Birth-day of our

our Blessed Saviour. The Angels celebrated his Nativity with a Song of Praise, and declar'd his coming into the World to be glad Tidings of great Joy unto all People; and therefore we are to welcome that happy Day with Hymns and Thankgivings. Let us then prepare to meet him at his own Table, and remember him now, that so he may remember us in his Heavenly Kingdom.



And now from these Calls to Joy and Thankgivings, we may learn, that the Service of God is to be performed not with pensive Looks, dejected Countenances, and mournful sighs; but with a more pleasant and cheerful Aspect, and Rejoicing. 'Tis a dishonour to God to come into his Presence with drooping and down-cast Eyes, as if he were a hard Master, that impos'd nothing but heavy and burdensome Tasks: And 'tis a dishonourment to Religion to bow down our heads like Bulrushes, as if we were a foolish People, that doings us to confusion and perpetual melancholy. But the Psalmist here bids us to praise the Lord with thanksgiving, and to come into his Sanctuary with a joyful Song. And this more especially to be done at the approaching Festival, when we are to keep the Birthday of

From



*From the Creed to the End of*  
**the MORNING-SERVICE.**

**DISCOURSE XXXVI.**

**ROM. X. 9, 10.**

*If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart that God hath rais'd him from the Dead, thou shalt be sav'd; for with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.*



**A**FTER the Lessons and Hymns before treated of, fitly follows the Apostles Creed, wherein we declare that Faith, which is more largely taught and held forth in them.

And this (as the Rubrick directs) is to be sung or said by the Minister and People, both standing: where we have the Persons that are to make this Confession, together with the Posture wherein it is to be made. For the Persons, that is not by the Priest alone, but by the Priest and People together, for every one is to make his own Confession; for he must confess with the mouth, as well as believe in his heart, the Lord Jesus; and every one is to be sav'd by his own Faith, and not another's: and therefore both the Text and the Church require every

every Man to confess for himself, and to evidence his Faith with his own mouth, saying in particular, *I believe.*

For the Posture, that is to be done *standing*, to signify by that Gesture our Readiness to profess, and our Resolution to adhere and stand to it; holding fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, or warping from it.

Now in this Creed we profess our Faith in the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that they all are but one God; and so worship the Unity, not a Plurality of Gods: for unto us there is but one God, and one Lord.

What we believe of the First Person of the blessed Trinity, is contain'd in the first Article, *viz. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth*; where to believe in general, is to assent to the Truth of a thing upon good and sufficient Testimony: It agrees with Science, Experience, and Opinion, as 'tis an assent to the truth of a thing; but differs from them all in the manner and ground of it, as 'tis an assent upon Testimony; whereas the others are grounded upon Sight, or the deductions of Reason. And this Faith differs according to the difference of the Testimony: To believe a thing upon the Testimony of Men, is a human Faith; upon the Testimony of God, is a divine Faith. And this is the Faith by which we believe our Creed; where,

*First*, We declare our Belief in God, *viz.* that there is one supreme, spiritual and independent Being, infinitely perfect in Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Holiness; the first Cause of all things, upon whom they all depend, both for their Essence and Operations.

That there is such a Being, we firmly believe from the Works of Creation and Providence, from the universal Consent of all Mankind, from the Miracles and Wonders wrought by him above the power of Nature or Art, from the Prediction of future contingent Events, and from the Testimony and Acts of our own Conscience; all which abundantly confirm us in the Belief that *God is*. Again,

*Secondly*, We believe that this God is the Father, not only of our Lord Jesus Christ, by an eternal and ineffable Generation; but likewise the Father of all, by Creation, Adoption and Regeneration; and therefore to be lov'd, serv'd, and obey'd before and above all things.

*Thirdly*, We believe this God the Father to be *Almighty*; that is, that he hath all Might and Power both in Heaven

Heaven and Earth; and can do whatever pleaseth him; that he hath no Bounds or Limits set to his Power, as we have, but is able to do all things, and nothing is impossible to him; neither is any thing hard or difficult to him, but he can do all things with Ease; with a Word of his Mouth, with a Cast of his Eye, or a Touch of his Hand. Moreover, he is Almighty, that is, he hath the Rule and Dominion of all things, and governs and disposes of them at his pleasure; he hath all Power from himself, and none have any but from him, and therefore is not to be withstood or resisted.

*Lastly,* We believe him to be the Maker of Heaven and Earth; that is of the whole World, and all things and created Beings in it: *it is he that hath made us, and not we our selves.* He made all things by the Word of his Power; he spake the Word, and they were made; he said it, and they were created: neither wanted he Matter to work upon, but made all things out of nothing, and therefore he is to be fear'd, trusted, and ador'd above all things. This is our Faith in the first Person of the Trinity, to whom Creation is more peculiarly ascrib'd. Our Faith in the second Person, to whom Redemption is more particularly attributed, is contain'd in the five following Articles; the first whereof is, *I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.* Where we believe him,

(1.) To be our *Jesus*; which in the Original signifies a Saviour, so call'd from the Salvation he wrought out for us. So the Angel charg'd the Blessed Virgin, saying, *Thou shalt call his Name Jesus, for he shall save his People from their Sins*; Mat. 1. 21. *Zachary* tells us, that God hath rais'd up a mighty Salvation, or a *Fort of Salvation* for us in the House of his Servant David; Luke 1. 55. For which reason he is justly stil'd *Jesus*, a Saviour; which is a Name above every Name, at which we are all commanded to bow.

(2.) We believe him to be *Christ*; that is, the Anointed of God; for so the word *Messiah* in Hebrew, and *Christ* in Greek, do both signify. Under the Law we read, that both Kings, and Priests, and Prophets were anointed with Oil, consecrated and kept in the Temple for that purpose. Accordingly, our Saviour is said to be anointed with the Oil of Gladness above his Fellows; he was anointed a King to rule and govern his Church; a Priest to offer Sacrifice for it; and a Prophet to teach and instruct it: so himself declar'd, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and hath anointed me*. Vol. I.



me to preach the Gospel. And therefore we may justly take him for the promised Messiah, and cast our selves entirely upon his Merits and Satisfaction.

(3.) We believe him to be the *only Son of God*; that is, by an eternal Generation, whereby the Godhead was in a way or manner inexpressible deriv'd upon and communicated to him: in which sense he is often stild the only Son, and the only begotten Son of the Father, none being ever in that manner born or begotten of him beside him.

Lastly, We believe him to be our *Lord*; that is, that he hath full Power and Authority over us; and that not only by Right of Creation, as he is God, but by Right of Redemption as he is our Mediator and Redeemer. He hath bought us with a Price, even the dear one of his own Blood; so that we are not our own, but his who hath so dearly bought us; and therefore we are to glorify him with our Souls and Bodies, which are both his: for let all the House of Israel know assuredly (saith St. Peter) that God hath made him both Lord and Christ; Acts 2. 36.

The next Article declares our Belief in the Conception and Nativity of this Son of God, and Saviour of the World: Where we believe,

1<sup>st</sup>, That he was *conceiv'd by the Holy Ghost*. This Act is in Holy Scripture ascrib'd intirely to the Influence and Operation of God's Holy Spirit: he was conceiv'd by the overshadowing Power of the most High, which made it miraculous; and without any Concurrence or Intervention of Man, which made it immaculate. Then for his Birth, we believe him to be born of the *Virgin Mary*; 'twas foretold by the Prophet *Isaiah*, that the Messiah should be *conceiv'd and born of a Virgin*; and both were accomplish'd in the Birth of Christ, who, according to the Prediction of the Angel, was conceiv'd and born of the *Virgin Mary*, and his Name called *Jesus*: Mat. 1. 21.

Moreover, for his Passion; we believe him to have *suffer'd under Pontius Pilate*. For his Sufferings in general, St. Peter tells us, *That Christ once suffer'd for Sins, the Just for the Unjust; that he might bring us to God*; 1 Pet. 3. 18. He had indeed no Sins of his own to suffer for; for he was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens*; he did no Sin, neither was any Guile found in his Mouth: and such a High Priest and Saviour became us; for he could never have satisfy'd for our Sins, if he had any of his own to suffer for. But when he

undertook

understood to be our Saviour, and Saviour, the whole Burden of our Sins lay upon him; and that was great enough to sink him into all that Misery and Trouble which he underwent for its Expiation, which in the following Articles are more particularly recited: for there we believe him to be crucified, dead, and buried, and that he descended into Hell; where we have the several Steps, Degrees, and Manner of his Sufferings. He was crucified; that is, he was nail'd to a Cross by his Hands and Feet, which being nervous and sensible Parts, put him to most acute and exquisite Pain; where, after he had hung for the space of six Hours, he gave up the Ghost, express'd in the Creed by his being dead. So we read, *He died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures*, 1 Cor. 15. 3. Indeed he underwent a proper Death by a Separation of his Body and Soul; the one going into the Grave, by which we believe him buried; the other into Hades, by which we believe he descended into Hell; that is, as some understand it, into the State of the Dead, whereby he fulfilled the whole Law of Death, or as others, into the State of the Damned, to shew his Victory and Triumph over them; and by both gave us a compleat Victory over Death and Hell, and conquer'd Satan in his own Quarters. Furthermore, we profess to believe in Heart, and confess with our Mouth, that God hath raised him from the Dead; that is, upon the third Day after his Death he rose again from the Grave. So the Apostle assures us, he was deliver'd for our Offences, and rose again for our justification; Rom. 4. His Death and Burial signify'd his being arrested and held awhile a Prisoner for our Debts; but his Resurrection shew'd his Release, that our Debt was paid, and full Satisfaction made to Divine Justice.

After which, having staid awhile upon Earth, partly to satisfy his Followers of the Truth of his Resurrection, and partly to settle and establish his Church in the World; he then left the infernal and inferiour Regions, and ascended up into Heaven, to the great Joy of all his Friends; and to the Terror and Confusion of all his Enemies. There he assum'd the Glory he had with the Father before the World began, and is set down at the right Hand of the Majesty on high; in that Post of Honour he is pleading the Cause of his People, and preparing for them Mansions of Glory, triumphing over his Enemies, and making all his Foes his Footstool. There the Heavens must receive him till the time of the Restitution of all things; that is, till his second

*Coming to judge both the Quick and the Dead.* At which time he will come in Power and great Glory, attended with a numerous Train of Angels to summon all Mankind before him, that every one may receive according to his Works, whether they have been good or evil: And then they that have done well, shall receive the Sentence of Absolution, and enter into eternal Life; and they that have done evil, shall hear the Sentence of Condemnation, and be doom'd to everlasting Fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels. This is what we believe of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity; and is the second part of our Creed. The

Third is, What we believe of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Trinity, together with the great Blessings and Benefits we receive by him. In rehearsing whereof we, *First*, Declare our Faith in this Third Person, saying, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*; whose peculiar Office it is to sanctify and work Holiness in the People of God, call'd therefore the Holy Spirit; and this it doth partly in our Baptism, by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; whereby we are said to be born again of Water and the Holy Ghost; and partly by implanting his Grace into our Hearts, and imparting those spiritual Aids and Assistances that help to illuminate our Minds, rectify our Wills, renew our Affections, and purify our whole Man. Moreover,

This Holy Spirit was given and sent to us to be a Comforter to us in all Conditions, to bear up our Spirits under all the Difficulties and Distresses that may happen to us. Hence we read of the *Comforts of the Spirit*, and the *Joys of the Holy Ghost*; which fill'd the Apostles and others with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

Again, this Holy Spirit is said to be our Advocate and Intercessor, to teach us to pray, by inspiring us with holy and devout Affections, and enabling to cry *Abba Father*, pleading our Cause, and making *Intercession for us with Sighs and Groans, that cannot be utter'd.*

And Lastly, He was given to be a Witness, not only to testify of Christ, that he is the Son of God; but to bear witness with our Spirits, that we also are the Children of God.

After



After our Faith in the Trinity, we are taught to believe the *Holy Catholick Church*; that it is but one, by the Unity of the Spirit. So the Apostle tells us, *there is one Body*, meaning the Church, *and one Spirit* to animate and enliven it; *Eph. 4. 4.* This one Church we believe to be Holy, in respect of that Holy Calling and Profession taken upon them by all the Members of it; and likewise of the Holy Offices and Duties perform'd in it: together with the Obligation to Holiness, that lies upon all its Members, who are call'd upon to be Holy, as he that calleth them is Holy, in all Conversation and Godliness.

And Lastly, 'Tis so stil'd in respect to the Nature, End, and Design, of it, which is to beget and increase Holiness in all its Members; for Christ purchas'd a Church, *to purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.* Furthermore, we believe this Holy Church to be Catholick; *i. e.* not confin'd to any one Place, as the Jewish Church was, but extends all the World over, and is dispers'd thro the Face of the whole Earth: insomuch that tho of old in Jewry only was God known, yet now his Ways are known upon Earth, and his saving Health unto all Nations. And from this universal Spread of it, 'tis call'd the Catholick Church.

Next, in this Catholick Church, we believe to be a *Communion of Saints*; where by Saints we understand all that are admitted into the Church by Baptism, who are by their Profession Holy, and by the Charity of the Church call'd Saints. By the Communion of Saints we understand their joining together in all the Publick Offices of our common Christianity; or, as the Apostle describes it, their *continuing steadfast in the Apostles Doctrine, and Fellowship, and breaking of Bread, and in Prayers*; *Acts 2. 42.* This Communion of Saints is that *Band of Peace* mention'd by St. Paul, by which we preserve the *Unity of the Spirit*; *Eph. 4.* It ties all the Members of the Church together, and makes them all to be but one Body in Christ Jesus. Whereas Schism and Separation in these Holy Offices divide the Unity of Christ's Church, and make it not one Body, but many; and are therefore made by the Apostle Signs of *Carnality*, and reckon'd among the *Works of the Flesh*.

Again, we believe in this Church a *Forgiveness of Sins*, to be obtain'd by all that truly desire and qualify themselves for it. By this we understand a general Release from the Guilt and Punishment of all our Sins; for by our

daily Breaches and Transgressions of God's Laws, we are all obnoxious to his Wrath, and liable to Death, the Wages and just Demerit of our Sins; and that not only a temporal Death, but Death spiritual and eternal. Now to be freed from this Debt to Divine Justice, and the Obligation to Punishment incur'd by it, is what is here meant by the Forgiveness of Sins. This was purchas'd for us by the Death of Christ, which was alone able to effect it: and 'tis confer'd upon us on the Conditions of Faith and Repentance, upon which alone it is to be obtain'd. 'Tis begun and granted in some measure here in this Life, but 'tis not compleated till the next: To which end we are taught farther to believe

*The Resurrection of the Dead*; that is, a Re-union of Soul and Body after a short Separation from each other. That this is possible, Christ's raising himself and others is a plain Proof; and that it certainly will be, the Word of him, that is Truth it self, doth frequently assure us: so that we have a firm Foundation for our Faith in this great and important Article. For the Author of the Resurrection, 'tis ascrib'd wholly to the Power of God; for nothing less than a Divine Omnipotent Power is able to effect it. And that is abundantly sufficient to bring it to pass; and therefore the Apostle would have none *think it incredible, that God should raise the Dead*; for he that gave Life at first, can as easily restore it, and our Bodies may be as well repair'd out of the former Materials, as it was at first form'd out of nothing. For the manner of the Resurrection, we read that Christ *will change our vile Bodies, that they may be like unto his glorious Body, &c.* that is, he will remove all Defects, Infirmities, and Imperfections from them; and endow them with all those Qualities and Perfections that belong to Heavenly and Glorious Bodies: which we are therefore stedfastly to believe and prepare for.

Lastly, We believe a *Life Everlasting*, to follow the Resurrection; that is, a future State of Happiness or Misery, to which all Men will be sentenc'd to continue in for ever. So our Saviour declares, that *the Wicked shall go into Everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life Eternal*; Mat. 25. 46. The State of the Wicked is set forth by going into everlasting Punishment: where 'tis describ'd by two things; by Punishment, and by its being everlasting. Now Punishment, you know, ever implies something that



is grievous, inflicted as the Demerit of a Crime; and that as to the Wicked will be double, the *Pœna Damni & Pœna Sensus*, the Punishment of Loss, and the Punishment of Sense: The one includes what they will be depriv'd of, which is of all that is good and desirable; the other of what they must endure, which will be acutest Pains and Torments; and both will be unspeakable and intolerable. And the Sting of all is, that they will be everlasting, and without end; that is, endless, easeless, and remediless.

The State of the Righteous is describ'd by *Life eternal*; where Life includes in it all that is happy and good: and its being Eternal, signifies it will have no End nor Decay.

This is a short Summary of the Apostles Creed, which we daily rehearse; and is that Catholick Faith, which except a Man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

~~CONFIRMATION OF THE BLESSING OF GOD UPON THE LORDS PRAYER~~

wholeness and commendable Form of Salutation, and with

## DISCOURSE XXXVII.

RUTH II. part of Verse 4.

Boaz said unto the Reapers, *The Lord be with you;* and they answer'd him, *The Lord bless thee:* Or, as some Translations read it, *be with thy Spirit.*

**A**FTER a Publick Rehearsal of the Creed, wherein we declare our common Consent and Agreement in all the great and necessary Articles of the Christian Faith, which have been lately explain'd to you, there follow in the Liturgy some short and pious Ejaculations to usher in and prepare us for the Lord's Prayer, the prime and principal Part of our publick Devotions; by which all our Prayers are to be form'd, and by which alone they can gain Acceptance. And the

First of these is in the Words of our Text, *The Lord be with you;* to which the Answer is, *The Lord bless thee, or be with thy Spirit.*



The Words are a solemn and hearty Salutation offer'd to pass between the Minister and People, before they proceed to offer up their publick and particular Petitions. They are taken from Boaz's Salutation here to his Reapers, who coming to them into the Field, and finding them diligent at their Work, said unto them, *The Lord be with you*; and they answer'd, *The Lord bless thee*: where, by the way, we may observe, that Diligence in the Work of the Field is attended with the Blessing of God and Man; whereas Idleness is justly depriv'd of the Blessing of both; which is the reason that Plenty attends the one, and Poverty the other: *For the diligent Hand maketh rich, but the Lazy shall be cloth'd in Rags*. But to go on,

This Form of Benediction of Boaz to his Reapers, *The Lord be with you*, became afterward a common Form of Salutation upon other solemn Occasions: for we find it frequently us'd among the Jews, and is deriv'd down and continu'd with us to this day; it being still usual upon the meeting and parting with Friends, to say, *The Lord be with you*: and the common saying of Godb'w'ye is, in its true Sense and Meaning, *God be with you*; which is a wholefom and commendable Form of Salutation, and with a good Mind accompanying it, very fit to be continu'd.

For which reason our Church hath thought fit to insert this Form of Blessing in this part of her Devotions, that when we have in our Creed shew'd our Harmony and Consent in Matters of Faith, we should be fitted to shew the same in the Matters of Prayer; both which are to be offer'd up in Faith and Love, which is in Christ Jesus. And to that end, the Minister is here directed to say, *The Lord be with you*; and the People to answer, *And with thy Spirit*: which is a Token of mutual Kindness and Charity to pass between them, blessing and wishing well to each other, that they may the better join in their Prayers, and be the better qualify'd to receive the Answer, and obtain the Success of them. To which end, I must speak something particularly to each of them:

And, First, of the Minister's part, who blesses his Auditors in these words, *The Lord be with you*; where I must shew this to be an antient Form of Blessing both in the Jewish and Christian Church; and then see what is included in it, or intended by it. For the

God commanded *Moses* to speak to *Aaron*, and to his *Sons*, to bless the People in this Form, saying unto them, *The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his Face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his Countenance upon thee, and give thee Peace*; Numb. 6. 23, 24, &c. which Form was after us'd by the Priests in the Holy Offices, and is continu'd in our Liturgy to this day. The Sense of it is contracted in this short Form of our Text, *The Lord be with you*, which comprizes the whole of it; for where God is, there must be all manner of Blessings. The Psalmist expresses it, by the Blessing of the Lord be upon you, we bless you in the Name of the Lord; Psal. 129. 8. In the old Translation it is, *The Lord prosper you, we wish you good luck in the Name of the Lord*; which kind of pious Wishes and friendly Salutations often occur in the Old Testament.

In the New, we find Christ and his Apostles using the same or the like Forms of blessing and saluting the People. St. Paul in his Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, and in sundry other Epistles, uses it in the same Words, saying, *The Lord be with you all*; 2 Thess. 3. 16. which, in the next words, he styles, *The Salutation of Paul with his own Hand*, which is the Token in every Epistle; So write I (saith he) the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.

Beside this, there was a wish of Peace frequently us'd by Jews and Christians, which was in effect the same with *The Lord be with you*. St. Paul hath them both in that fore-cited place, where he saith, *The Lord of Peace himself give you Peace always, by all means*. This Salutation we find often us'd by our Blessed Saviour; for when he came into the House where his Disciples were assembled, he saluted them, saying, *Peace be unto you*; John 20. 19. which he repeated again, ver. 21. and commanded his Disciples into whatsoever House they should enter, first to say, *Peace be to this House*; which was a Wish of Health and Welfare to all that were in it: yea, Peace including all manner of Blessings which the Presence of God could afford, it was all one as to say, *The Lord be with you*. Our Saviour indeed lik'd not the frequent, formal, and ceremonious Salutations of the World, which carry more of Compliment and Hypocrisy, than any real Desires of Good: after which manner he bid his Disciples to salute no Man by the way, Luke 10. 4. but yet he would not have them to omit any sincere Wishes or Expressions of Kindness and Civility towards others: for in the very next Verse, he recommends hearty

heartly Wishes of Peace and Prosperity, and when they enter a new House, in this manner to salute it; Mat. 10. 12. And if they be worthy, your Peace shall rest upon them; if not, your Peace shall return to you again. Now this Worthiness is to be measur'd by the Soundness and Sincerity of their Faith; according to which we are to receive or reject any that come to us. Hence St. John cautions us not to salute or wish good luck to any Apostates or Revolvers from the Faith; 2 Epist. ver. 10, 11. If there come any unto you, and bring not this Doctrine (meaning the Doctrine sum'd up in the Apostles Creed) receive him not into your House, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed, is Partaker of his evil Deeds. But elsewhere we are commanded to receive them that are sound in the Faith, and to pray for a Blessing upon them. Suitable hereunto, when the People have rehears'd with the Minister the Words of the Creed, and thereby shew they embrace the same true Faith, we may and ought to bid them God-speed, and to say, as the Church directs, *The Lord be with you.*

The professing the same Faith, hath been ever reckon'd one of the firmest Bonds of Love and Charity; and therefore when we have recited our Creed together, and these endearing Offices have pass'd between us, we may very well salute as Brethren, and pray for one another, saying, *The Lord be with you.*

This pious Ejaculation, or Holy Wish, was frequently us'd in the antient Liturgies of the Church, before the Prayers, the Gospel, and other Parts of Divine Service; and was appointed as an Introduction to those Holy Offices by the Direction of the Apostles, as is affirm'd by the Council of Braccara; which Custom is piously continu'd among us to this day.

But what is the Sense of this Divine Salutation, or what is intended by it? Why! it implies in it these three things:

- (1.) The Lord be with you, to assist you in your Prayers.
- (2.) The Lord be with you, to accept your Prayers.
- (3.) The Lord be with you, to crown and reward your Services. All which being included in this Wish, must be a little briefly consider'd.

And, (1.) I say 'tis intended as a short Prayer for the Divine Assistance. The Lord be with you; that is, to help your Infirmities, to quicken your Affections,



to lift up your Hearts, and to raise your Devotion. As for our selves, we can do nothing without the Aid and Assistance of God's Grace. *We know not what to pray for as we ought* (saith the Holy Apostle) *but the Spirit helps our Infirmities, and makes Intercession for us with Sighs and Groans, that cannot be utter'd*: Rom. 8.

The best of Men are subject to many Distractions and Indispositions in Holy Duties. Satan is very busy to inject vain Thoughts, and to disturb them with evil Suggestions. The World is too apt to interpose, to draw away their Minds to earthly Matters, and to take off their Hearts from what they are about. The Lusts of the Flesh likewise are too forward to solicit and steal in upon them, to work upon their Corruption, and to prompt them to Evil. And therefore there is great need of the Succours of Divine Grace to help against all these Impediments and Avocations from true Devotion. And this is one thing intended and desired by the Priest in uttering this Petition in the behalf of the People, *The Lord be with you*.

(2.) Another thing is, for the Acceptance as well as the Assistance of our Prayers. And so the Lord be with you, is a Wish of Favour and Good-liking of your Services, that you may offer up Sacrifices well pleasing to him, that your Prayers may come before him as Incense, and the lifting up of your Hands as a Morning-Sacrifice.

The truth is, our Prayers and best Performances have so many Failings and Imperfections cleaving to them, as may justly render them an Abomination unto the Lord. And we may, with the Prophet, resemble our best *Righteousness* to *filthy Rags and menstruous Cloths*, things odious and offensive in the Nostrils of any. Neither can God smell a sweet Savour in any of our Offerings, unless they are perfum'd with the Incense of his Son's Merits and Intercession; and therefore the Minister prays the Son of God to be with you to do this for you, to cover the Defects of your good Works, and to procure them Acceptance.

(3.) This pious Wish farther implies not only God's accepting, but rewarding our Prayers: and so *the Lord be with you*, is to give you the Return of your Prayers, and to crown your Services with everlasting Glory. Indeed, our best Works are so far from meriting any Favour at God's hand, that they deserve nothing but Frowns from him; for when we have done our utmost, we are but unprofitable Servants, that rather provoke than pacify him by  
our

our holiest Performances. And therefore this Petition is here presented unto God, not only to pardon the Defects, and pity the Infirmities, but to accept the Desires, and reward the good Intentions of serving him; neither of which, without God's Goodness, is to be hoped for or expected; for eternal Life, and all the means leading thereunto, are the sole Gifts of God, and are owing intirely to his Grace and Favour. If God be with us, we may be enabled to do all things; but without him we can do nothing: And therefore our Church fitly directs the Minister to salute the People with this Wish, *The Lord be with you*; the sense and reason whereof we have in some measure seen. From whence I proceed,

Secondly, To the Answer or Return of the People to the Minister: and that in the Text is, *The Lord bless thee*; in the Liturgy it is, *Be with thy Spirit*. This Form of Blessing on the People's part, is taken out of 2 Tim. 4. 22. where St. Paul salutes Timothy in these words; *The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy Spirit*. Which was a Wish of the divine Presence and Assistance in the Discharge of his holy Office. The Sense of it here in our Liturgy is, that when the Minister is about to offer up Prayers and spiritual Sacrifices for the People, they make some Return, by putting up this Petition for the Minister, That the Spirit of God, without whom nothing is good, nothing is holy or acceptable to him, would vouchsafe to be *with his Spirit*, in these spiritual Exercises; to enable him to perform them aright, to the Glory of God, and the Edification of his Church and People.

Our Saviour tells us, that *God being a Spirit*, must be worship'd *in Spirit and in Truth*; and St. Paul wills us to *pray and sing with the Spirit, and with the Understanding also*. Now to the doing of both, the Influence of God's Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary; which the People therefore heartily implore in the behalf of the Minister and themselves, that his Prayers for them may not be in vain in the Lord; but that the Minister may speak, and they may hear them as the Oracles of God, and both may reap spiritual Comfort and Benefit by them. Thus the Priest is here directed to pray for and wish well to the People, and the People again to pray for and wish well to the Priest; that the Lord may be with the one, and bless the other.

Such mutual Salutations and Prayers interchangeably passing between them, are excellent Expressions of the Communion of Saints, and may prove great Furtherances and Preservatives of it. For by this spiritual Intercourse they own themselves to be one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another; that they are mutually concern'd for each other's Good, and ever ready to pray for and to promote it.

This we find was the practice of St. Paul in most of his Epistles, and this was generally the Carriage of those to whom they were sent; for his Epistles begin with the Salutation of *Grace and Peace be with you*, and return'd with the Prayers and good Wishes of those to whom they were written.

In his Epistle to the *Philippians*, he tells them, how mindful he was of them always, in every Prayer, making request for them with joy: that he had them always in his Heart, calling God to witness, how greatly he long'd for them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ; praying that their Love might abound more and more in Knowledge and in all Judgment, that they might approve things that are excellent, and be kept blameless to the coming of our Lord: with many other Expressions of his Love and hearty Desires of their Welfare.

The *Philippians*, on the other hand, were not wanting in their Returns of Love and Thanksgiving to God for him; being all Partakers of the same Grace, as we read at large in that Epistle.

In his Epistle to the *Colossians*, we find him upon the like Strains of Affection and Devotion in their behalf; and they likewise as forward to requite his Prayers with Gratitude and good Wishes. In the first Chapter, after his common Salutation of *Grace be with you, and Peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ*; he declares, how constantly he pray'd for them, since the day that he heard of their Faith in Christ, and their Love to all the Saints: yea, that he never ceas'd praying for them, that they might be filled with the Knowledge of God's Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding. And likewise we read there, what Messages of Kindness those *Colossians* sent to him by *Epaphras his Fellow-Servant in the Gospel*, who declar'd the Love they bore to him in the Spirit, ver. 7, 8.

The like Intercourse of Prayers and Intercessions, we find in his Epistle to the *Thessalonians*; where they mutually ask each others Prayers: *Brethren* (saith he) pray  
for



for us, as we cease not at all times to pray for you. The Apostle's Prayer for them, was for their Constancy and Perseverance in the Faith, that God would strengthen them with all might in the inner Man. Their Prayer for the Apostle was, That Visitation might be given unto him, that he might open his mouth, to make known the Mysteries of the Gospel, and speak boldly as he ought to speak. By all which we see what endearing Expressions of mutual Love and Kindness pass'd between them, heartily wishing well and praying for one another. From whence our Church in her publick Service hath piously order'd the Priest to bless the People, saying, *The Lord be with you*; and the People to pray for the Priest, saying, *The Lord be with thy Spirit*. And because the Presence and Influence of God's Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for both, we ought all to say with Solomon at the Dedication of the Temple, *The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our Fathers; let him not leave us, nor forsake us*: 1 Kings 8. 57.

Thus we see the Sense and Meaning of this mutual Satisfaction both in the Text and Liturgy, as also how useful and well-grounded such pious Wishes and Ejaculations are, when heartily put up for the Good of one another. Wherefore to draw to a Conclusion,

Let me exhort both Minister and People to a frequent and pious Use of these Petitions, and not to say them only by rote, or as words of course; but seriously to mind the Sense and Purport of them. We see the Priest's wishing the Lord to be with the People, signifies a Desire of all that Good, which the Presence of the Lord can afford them; who being the Fountain of all Good, 'tis to turn the Stream of his Mercy and Bounty upon them. The People's praying God to bless the Minister, and to be with his Spirit, implies all that spiritual Aid and Assistance that the Spirit of God can give them; which alone can make the Man of God perfect, and thorowly furnish'd to every good Work.

Both these are to proceed from the Heart, and to be deliver'd in all Truth and Sincerity, that they may obtain their desir'd effect.

Let these divine Offices then be carefully observ'd, and devoutly pass between the Minister and People; and that will be an excellent means to preserve mutual Love and Kindness between them: it being almost impossible, where these Duties are heartily perform'd, that there should be any envy or enmity between them. For how can a Minister

ster hate the People, for whom he daily prays and wishes well to? Or how can the People behave themselves rudely and indecently towards the Minister, for whom they daily desire the Assistance and Residence of God's Holy Spirit? These mutual Blessings and Prayers for each other, if duly perform'd, cannot but kindle the Flames of Love in the breasts of both; which, if daily blown up by such pious Salutations, will like the vestal Flames be still kept burning, or like the Altar-Fires never go out. In a word, Such good Wishes, join'd with fair and just Dealing, will naturally extinguish all those Animosities and Contentions, which false Prayers and false Practices only keep alive. Wherefore,

Let the Priest consider the Wants of the People, and heartily say, The Lord be with them, to help all their Infirmities, and supply all their Wants: And let the People consider the Weight and Difficulty of the Priest's Office, and devoutly pray God to be with his Spirit. So will both find the Comfort and Benefit of such short Petitions, and receive a gracious Answer to all such hearty and devout Prayers: Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

PSALM CXXIII. 3.

*Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.*

**T**HE Church having prepar'd both Minister and People by a mutual Salutation and Blessing of each other, in the foregoing words, of which I lately discours'd; it next enters them both upon their Prayers, directing, in the following words, to say,

*Let us pray: Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us, Lord have mercy upon us.* Where you may observe,

*First,* A holy Call or Excitation to Prayer, in these words,

*Let us pray.*

*Secondly,* The Prayer it self prescrib'd to us; which consists of a Petition for Mercy thrice repeated, and directed

directed to each Person of the Holy Trinity, saying, *Lord have mercy upon us*; which relates to God the Father: *Christ have mercy upon us*; which relates to God the Son: and *Lord have mercy upon us*; which relates to God the Holy Ghost. Of each of which, something particularly. And,

*First*, Of the Call or Excitation to Prayer, in these words, *Let us pray*. This Form of Speech we find often used in all the antient Liturgies, from whence our Church hath taken it. By it the Minister gives as it were the Signal or Watch-word, willing them to lift up their Hearts and Voices unto Heaven, and to join together in their Cries for Mercy with an holy Importunity. We read, that the Deacons in the antient Services were wont to call upon the People, saying, *Εὐχεται ἀδελφοί, Let us pray earnestly*. In conformity wherunto, we still retain the like Admonition, by saying, *Let us pray*: the Design whereof is to call back our wandring Minds, to recollect our scatter'd Thoughts, and make them more intent upon the Duty we are about. For the best of us are subject to many roving Thoughts and wandring Imaginations in our holy Duties; and therefore we all want a frequent Monitor to call upon us, and to keep our Minds close to the Matter and Manner of our Prayers.

Some thro Negligence and Inadvertence let loose their Minds, and suffer them to wander in the corners of the Earth; which must be therefore call'd back, to quicken their Attention, and to increase their Fervency.

Others are too apt to be drouzy, and to sleep at their Prayers; and must therefore be awaken'd, to rouse up and raise their Devotion.

Others again are choak'd and overcharg'd with the Cares of the World, which make their Thoughts run too much upon the Profits, Pleasures, or Honours of this Life, and so are apt to mingle too much with holy things: so that we all stand in need of a Monitor, to enliven our Devotion, and renew our Vigour and Intention. And this our Church hath order'd the Minister to be, by often calling upon us, *Let us pray*; which you see is grounded upon good reason.

But some think these words to be a Call not only to the Continuance, but to the Change of our Devotion, inviting us to another way and method of petitioning; that is, *Let us pray* by alternate Supplications, in which the People answer the Minister by short Versicles and Responses. For the



the Antients distinguish between Prayers and Supplications, making Prayers to be that which is said by the Priest alone, the People only saying *Amen*, in the close; but Supplications to be Petitions spoken by the Minister and People together by turns; the one answering the other in some short and pithy Ejaculations, as in the Litany and other places, and as it is in the Versicles and Responses that follow this Admonition.

But however that be, 'tis most certain, that this Call here, *Let us pray*, was chiefly intended to stir up our Minds by way of remembrance, to gather our Thoughts, and fix them the more earnest and intent upon what we are about; that our Prayers may be such as St. James describes, *effectual fervent Prayers*; or hearty inwrought Prayers, that prevail much, and procure that by their Vehemence and Importunity, that will never be granted to cold and heartless Petitions. And we see the best of us, by reason of the Faintness and Slackness of our Devotion, have frequent need to be thus call'd upon.

From whence I proceed, *Secondly*, to the Prayer it self, which follows this Invitation to it: and that is in these words; *Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us, Lord have mercy upon us*. This by the antient Fathers is call'd, *The Lesser Litany*, containing a particular Address or Petition to each of the Persons in the Blessed Trinity; wherein we call upon God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to have mercy upon us. Where we give the first and third Persons the same title of *Lord*, and the second the name of *Christ*, being anointed and appointed of both; and being all equal in Power, Justice, and Goodness, we address in the same words to them all, which is to find Mercy and Favour from them: and our putting up one and the same Petition thrice, denotes our praying to three Persons and one God; which shews our Faith and Trust in the Holy Trinity.

I know there are some ignorant deluded Persons, who would charge these repeated Petitions for Mercy as vain Repetitions, such as our Saviour condemn'd in the Heathens and Pharisees; but with how little shew of Reason, may be easily seen from the practice of our Saviour himself, who repeated the same words three times in his Prayer to his Father, in the Bitterness of his Agony: which plainly shews, that repeating the same words out of Earnestness and Affection, may not be thought a vain Repetition. The same is confirm'd by the Psalmist's practice in the Text, and

in sundry other places, wherein he doubles and trebles the same Petition for Mercy; saying, *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.* The Lepers in the Gospel cry'd often, *Lord have mercy upon us.* So did the two blind Men, who sitting in the way-side as our Saviour pass'd to Jerusalem, cry'd out, *Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.* And when the Multitude rebuk'd them, that they should hold their peace, they cry'd the more earnestly, saying, *Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.* And Christ was so far from rejecting their Requests, as vain Repetitions, that he kindly receiv'd both, restoring Health to the Lepers, and Sight to the blind Men; as we read *Mar. 20. 30, &c.* A certain Woman of Canaan came to him with the same Petition, in the behalf of her Daughter vex'd with an evil Spirit; crying to him, and saying, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David:* which she repeated so often, that the Disciples blam'd her Importunity, and desir'd our Saviour to dismiss her, *for she crieth after us:* But Christ, instead of sending her away, call'd for her to come to him, and being well pleas'd with the Earnestness of her Suit, commended her Faith, and heal'd her Daughter: of which we read, *Mar. 15. 22.*

By all which it appears, that our doubling and trebling this Petition for Mercy is well grounded; and is not a vain, but a very useful and successful Repetition: especially considering that our Church useth it here as as a particular Address to each Person in the Ever-blessed Trinity. And that for very good reason too: for,

1<sup>st</sup>, We all owe a particular Homage and Service to each of those Divine Persons. For beside that super-eminent Power and Dominion they all have over us, we stand oblig'd to each of them, both for our Being and Well-being. We receive the Mercy of our Creation from God the Father, the Mercy of our Redemption from God the Son, and the Mercy of our Sanctification from God the Holy Ghost. And as we owe a particular Debt of Gratitude for each of these Mercies, so are we to pay a particular Duty and Observance to each of the Persons that bestow them: which cannot be better done, than by making a particular Address to them.

Again, 2<sup>dly</sup>, We have offended all the three Persons in the Holy Trinity; and therefore we are to ask Mercy and Pardon particularly of each. We have affronted God the Father, by offending against his holy Laws, and so may and ought to ask Mercy and Pardon at his hands. We have  
offended



offended God the Son, by refusing the Terms of Peace and Reconciliation; which he dearly purchas'd for us; and so may very well sue for Mercy and Forgiveness from him. We have offended God the Holy Ghost, by mis-employing his Gifts, suppressing his good Motions, and rejecting his holy Comforts; and so may and ought to beg pardon for the despoilment thereby done to the Spirit of Grace. Which things require a particular Request for Mercy, to be made to each of them.

And that, 3dly, because we need the Help of all the three Persons in the Trinity, to guard us here, and to reward us hereafter. We need the Favour of God the Father, to overlook our many Failings and Aberrations from his Laws. We want the Merits of God the Son, to make an Atonement and Intercession for us. We want the Comforts of God the Holy Ghost, to bear us up under the Troubles of the World, to guide us by his Counsel here, and after to bring us to Glory.

These are great and invaluable Mercies, to be ask'd by particular Petitions to the three Persons, as the Authors and Bestowers of them. And this may abundantly justify the Piety and Prudence of our Church in the thrice repeating of this Petition of *Lord have mercy upon us*; which no wise Man will think a vain, but a necessary and pious Repetition. But to speak yet more particularly to them: the

First *Lord have mercy upon us* relates to God the Father, the first Person in the Trinity; who being the first Spring and Fountain of all Mercy, from whence it flows, is first to be ask'd and address'd to for it: *Every good Gift and every perfect Gift* (saith St. James) *is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.* He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is therefore stil'd *his only begotten and beloved Son*: He is the Father of Spirits, that sends to us the Holy Ghost, call'd therefore *the Spirit of the Father*. So that God the Father is the original Source or Spring-head of all our Mercies, which all come first and principally from him; and therefore we fitly begin with him in our Petitions for them.

The thing we here sue to him for, is Mercy; which our Misery prompts to ask, and his merciful Nature readily inclines him to give. We have indeed many ways provok'd our Heavenly Father, and have thereby justly incur'd the direful effects of his Displeasure; which if he should execute upon us with rigour, it must bring upon us the ex-



trement Misery. We have affronted God as our Creator, by forgetting his Works, and not considering the great things he hath done for us; by abusing his Creatures, and distrusting his Providence; by being lifted up with Pride, or cast down with Despair; by wasting our Time and Substance, and repining at his Dealings and Dispensations with us: all which are Sins more directly committed against God the Father as our Maker and Preserver, and may make us say with the Prodigal, *Father, we have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and are no more worthy to be call'd thy Sons.* And having thus chiefly offended him, we are first and principally to address to him for Mercy and Pardon; which is the Sense and Reason of this first *Lord have mercy upon us*, directed to God the Father.

The Second is, *Christ have mercy upon us*, which is directed to God the Son, the second Person in the Holy Trinity. Having first crav'd Mercy and Pardon of the Father, we next beg the same of his only-begotten Son, and thereby observe the Command of God, that *all Men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; for he that *honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him*: John 5. 23. And therefore being equal in Power and Glory, all good Christians have ever given the same Worship and Adoration to both; especially since the Title of Christ was given to him merely for his being anointed to and accepting of the great Work of our Salvation: which having by his infinite Merits effected for us, we are to invoke him with the highest Acts of Honour and Gratitude, and to put up the same Petition to him, as we did to the Father that sent him, *viz. to have mercy upon us.*

For, as I before observ'd, there are some particular Sins committed more directly against God the Father; for which, in the foregoing Petition, we beg mercy of him to be deliver'd from the Guilt and Punishment of them: so there are some particular Sins more directly committed against God the Son, which carry great Aggravations, and expose to great Miseries; for which, in this Petition, we beg Christ to have mercy upon us, by not imputing to us the Guilt, nor inflicting on us the just Punishment of them.

Now the Sins more immediately committed against God the Son, are such as these; the Unbelief and Contempt of his Doctrine and Miracles; Impenitence, and an obstinate Refusal of the Means and Offers of Salvation; Unthankfulness

fulness for his Benefits; the Neglect of his Sacraments; presuming upon his Mercy, without performing the Conditions of it; and despairing of his Grace, in doing our utmost to obtain it; doubting his Promises, despising his Threats, and putting his Salvation from us.

These and the like Sins are direct Affronts to the second Person of the Sacred Trinity, being a *trampling under foot the Son of God, and accounting the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing*; and consequently must be attended with most severe and futable Punishments: *For how shall we escape (saith the Apostle) if we neglect or despise so great Salvation?* There being no other Sacrifice for Sin, but what Christ hath offer'd for us, there can remain nothing without Repentance, but a fearful looking for of Judgment: and therefore we have great reason to double this Petition, and say, *Christ have mercy upon us.*

The Third *Lord have mercy upon us* is an Address to the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the Blessed Trinity; who being equally offended by our Transgressions, is to be equally invoked by the same Petition for Mercy. And here again, as there were some Sins more immediately committed against the Father and the Son, so there are some more directly against the Holy Ghost; by which we are said *to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and to do despite to the Spirit of Grace.* Such are the quenching its good Motions, rejecting its holy Comforts, neglecting or mis-employing its Gifts, resisting its Calls, and refusing to hear the Voice of the Charmer, tho he charm never so wisely. And as these and the like Sins are more directly committed against the Holy Spirit, which is thereby more particularly provok'd; so there are some spiritual Evils and Miseries, that are more immediately sent and inflicted by him: as Desolation or leaving us to the Blindness of our Minds, and the Hardness of our own Hearts; the with-holding his Graces and blessed Influences, striving no more for our Amendment, but giving us up to all the Miseries of a reprobate Sense, and to the just Punishment of an incorrigible Mind; which are the sorest Evils that can betide us. Now to prevent these heavy Judgments from coming upon us, or to remove them where they already are, our recourse must be to this Holy Spirit, to implore his Mercy and Grace to sanctify our Natures, to purify our Hearts, to renew our Spirits, to open our Ears to Instructions, and to pardon all former Provocations: which shews us a sufficient reason

for trebling this Petition, and saying again, *Lord have mercy upon us.*

Thus we see how unjustly this is charg'd for a vain Repetition, and how reasonable it is, that we should crave mercy of every Person in the Blessed Trinity, whom we have so grievously offended, and of whose Mercy and Pardon we all stand in such indispensable need : which is what we are here piously taught and directed to do.

It remains then, that we frequently and fervently put up this Petition, and repeat it thrice with Heartiness and Affection, as 'tis here appointed. This Petition was antiently known and stil'd by the name of *Kyrie Eleeson*, which in *English* is *Lord have mercy upon us* ; and was by the primitive Christians utter'd with the greatest Earnestness and Intention of Mind, as Persons sensible of their Danger of sinking into endless Perdition, without the Mercy of the Blessed Trinity : which made them often cry, like St. *Peter* in the Storm, *Lord save us, or else we perish.* Have mercy upon us, or we are undone for ever ; have mercy upon us in pardoning our Sins, which cast us out of the Favour of God the Father ; have mercy upon us, and intitle us to the Atonement or Reconciliation made by God the Son ; have mercy upon us, and help our Infirmities, by the blessed Influences of the Holy Spirit. This sweet and wholesom Custom of saying *Kyrie Eleeson* (saith an antient Council) was used in the Eastern and Western Churches, and was therefore order'd to be still continu'd in the Morning, Evening, and Communion-Service.

And tho' this earnest and humble Supplication be useful and seasonable in all the parts of our publick Worship, yet 'tis usually set immediately before the Lord's Prayer, to usher it in, and to prepare us for it ; as we may see not only here, but in the Litany, and many other Offices of the Church : and very fitly too, for we may not presume to utter this divine Prayer with unsanctify'd Lips, nor may we call God *Father*, till we have made our way to him by humble Supplications for Grace and Mercy : *If I be your Father, where is my Honour, saith the Lord of Hosts ?* Mal. 1. 6. And indeed it is so great an honour to call God our Father, that (as a Reverend Prelate hath well observ'd) we had need to shew the greatest Honour, and with all humility beg pardon of his Majesty, before we venture upon so high a Title.



To conclude then, Let us seriously meditate upon these Petitions, and with devout Affection and Compunction of Mind offer them up unto God, that we may be well prepar'd to rehearse together the Lord's Prayer, which immediately follows.



## DISCOURSE XXXIX.

### PSALM LXXXV. 7.

*Show us thy Mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy Salvation.*

**O**UR Church hath selected out of the Holy Scripture some short significant Sentences or Petitions, to go before the Lord's Prayer, and other pious and pithy Ejaculations to follow after it; which are fitly compar'd to Darts or Arrows, that sooner pierce the Heavens, and enter into the Ears of God, than longer Prayers. Such was that of our Saviour in his Agony; *Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me*: which he thrice repeated with a hearty Affection and humble Submission; adding, *Nevertheless not my Will, but thine be done*. And such was that of the Leper, *Lord if thou wilt thou canst make me clean*: which being spoken in Faith and Humility, prevail'd for his cleansing. Such likewise was that of the blind Man, *Luke 18. Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me*: which he went on repeating again and again, till his Eyes were open'd, and his Sight restor'd to him. Of the same kind was that of St. Peter, when in danger of drowning; *Lord save us, we perish*: which soon abated and allay'd the Storm. And the poor Publican's short Litany, *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner*, prevail'd more for his Justification than the long vaunting Prayers of the proud Pharisee.

From the Success of these and the like Examples, the Church hath wisely prescrib'd some of these short piercing Petitions, taken out of God's Word, to follow the Lord's Prayer; which the Priest is order'd to pronounce standing, and the People to answer kneeling: And both very fitly, to

shew the Authority of the one, and the Humility of the other. For the Priest, as the Minister and Ambassador of the Most High, to signify the Office and Authority receiv'd from him, is to speak as the Oracle of God; and as the Advocate and Intercessor of the People, to offer up their Prayers and Sacrifices unto him, is to be look'd upon as their Mouth, to speak and act in their stead: both which being Acts of high Dignity and Authority, are to be perform'd in the posture of standing. And the People being subjected to their Discipline and Instruction, and to receive the Law at their mouth, are directed to hear and answer in the humble posture of kneeling. In short,

The Design of these interlocutory Sentences, is to take off the Tedioufness of the Duty, and by mutual Responses to advance the Pleasure of it; to elevate the Devotion of the Priest, and quicken the Attention of the People, and to unite the Hearts of both in these holy Offices.

Now among the many Sentences and Versicles of Scripture selected for this purpose, this which I have read to you in our Text, is the first: *Shew us thy Mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy Salvation.* 'Tis a short Prayer taken out of that rich Treasury of Devotion, the Psalms of David, which furnish us with pious Prayers and Meditations proper and suitable to all Occasions. The Occasion of the words in this Psalm was from a great Deliverance granted to David, from the Rage and Fury of his Enemies. And the reason of using them in this place of our Liturgy, is partly to enforce the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, which goes immediately before; and partly to introduce the following Collects and Prayers that come after, of which these Versicles are a brief Summary or Epitome.

For the Case of David; he was just before deliver'd from the Malice of Saul, and the Incurfions of the Philiftines: in memory whereof he compos'd this Psalm of Thanksgiving, in which he blesses God, for being gracious to the Land, and turning again the Captivity of Jacob: whereby he had taken away all his Displeasure, and turn'd himself from his wrathful Indignation. And for the Continuance of his Favour, he prays God to turn them from their Offences, that he may turn again and quicken them, and that his People may rejoice in him: And then follow the words of our Text, *Shew us thy Mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy Salvation.* Which words are here insert'd in our Liturgy, as a short Prayer consisting of two Petitions. The



one to be utter'd by the Priest; *O Lord, let thy Mercy be shew'd upon us*; The other by the People; *And grant us thy Salvation*. And both are to contend with an holy Emulation, who shall be most devout in offering them up; the Minister leading the way, and the People following with an ardent Devotion, heating each other's Zeal; and as one Coal kindles another, so are they mutually to inflame each others Affections: and that will make it an acceptable and sweet-smelling Sacrifice.

In treating therefore of this Prayer, I begin,

*First*, With the Minister's part, in these words, *O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us*. Where the Priest, as the Mouth of the People, presents their Petition, and makes their Request known unto God. The Subject-matter of the Request is for Mercy; and as he before doubled and trebled their Suit for it, so here he begs some visible Token of Mercy to be shew'd to them, to signify that their Prayers are heard, and the Request granted. 'Twas before, *Lord have mercy upon us*; but here 'tis, *Lord shew thy mercy upon us*; that is, Let us have some Sign or Seal of thy Divine Favour manifested and made visible to us, and by some Mark or Token be assur'd of thy Loving-kindness. So we find the Psalmist often praying, *Lord shew some token upon me for good, that they who hate me may see it and be ashamed, because thou, Lord, hast holpen me and comforted me*; Psal. 86. 17. Where he desires some outward Mark or Sign of the divine Love and Care of him, for the Conviction of his Enemies, and for the Comfort of himself and Friends. And he would have it such a one too, as might be visible; that *all Men may see it, and say, this hath God done, and may perceive it to be his Work*; Psal. 64. 9.

'Tis natural to desire some Return of our Prayers, and every Petitioner waits and longs for an Answer to his Request; especially where his Necessities loudly call for it. *I will brarken* (saith the Psalmist in the next words to our Text) *what the Lord God will say concerning me; for he shall speak peace to his People, and to his Saints, that they turn not again*: meaning, that he will make his Goodness so apparent to the World, that we may be encourag'd to go on in the ways of Wisdom, and not to turn again to Folly. Now the Psalmist having pray'd for these visible Signs of his Loving-kindness, he seems to have full assurance of receiving them: for *his Salvation* (saith he) is

nigh



nigh them that fear him, that Glory may dwell in the Land: A token whereof he hath given us, in Mercy and Truth's meeting together, and in Righteousness and Peace's kissing each other. From whence he gathers, that Truth shall spring out and flourish in the earth, because Righteousness hath looked down from Heaven: assuring himself, the Lord shall and will shew Loving-kindness, and our Land shall give her Increase; for Righteousness shall go before him, and direct his going in the way. This is the Sense of the Prayer in the Text, and this is what our Liturgy here directs the Minister to pray in the behalf of the People; to wit, that the Mercy of God may be visibly shew'd upon them, for the benefit and comfort both of themselves and others; and that God may have the Glory in their hearty Acknowledgments and Thanksgivings.

But how was the Mercy of God shew'd upon David, and how do we pray it may be shew'd upon us?

For the Mercies shew'd to David, they were many and great; of which we find him making frequent and grateful Acknowledgments throughout the whole Book of Psalms: And these Mercies were of divers kinds, some earthly Blessings appertaining only to this Life, others heavenly Blessings relating chiefly to the World to come; both which being confirm'd by the Promise, and ratify'd by the Oath of God, the two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lye, are in Scripture call'd, *The sure Mercies of David*, Isa. 55. 3. Of the earthly Mercies shew'd to him, the first, and the foundation of all the rest, was God Almighty's giving him the Kingdom of Israel, and establishing him and his Seed upon the Throne for ever. Of which he speaks at large in the 89th Psalm, where the Psalmist in the beginning sings of the Mercies of the Lord, and with his Mouth sets forth his Truth to all Generations. After which he declares the Covenant that God made with him, and the Oath that he swore unto David his Servant, to establish his Seed for ever, and to set up his Throne from one Generation to another; bringing in God Almighty saying, *I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have found David my Servant, with my holy Oil have I anointed him.* From whence he proceeds to promise, that his Hand should hold him fast, and his Arm should strengthen him; that the Enemy should not be able to do him violence, nor the Son of Wickedness approach to hurt him, &c. In which, as in many other places, he was promis'd Victory

ty over Enemies, Deliverance from all Dangers, with Success and Prosperity in all his Affairs: and this to continue to him and to his Seed for ever. These are the earthly Blessings or Mercies which *David* pray'd to be shew'd upon him.

The Spiritual or Heavenly Mercies contain'd and promis'd in this Covenant, were the Graces of the Spirit, the Remission of Sins, and Life everlasting, which he likewise pray'd might be shew'd or bestow'd upon him. For the Graces of the Spirit, he begg'd for Repentance, that God would give him a clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within him. For Faith, Love, and Trust in him, that God might be a Father to him and to his Seed, and they might be to him as Sons and Children.

For the Remission of Sins, he pray'd God to have mercy upon him, in doing away his Offences, and according to the multitude of his Mercies to blot out all his Transgressions; which he thankfully acknowledges in the second Verse of this Psalm: *Thou hast forgiven the Offences of thy People, and cover'd all their Sins. And blessed is he whose Iniquities are forgiven, and whose Sin is cover'd.* For that leads to Life everlasting, the Sum total of all God's Mercies, and of our Happinefs.

These are the principal Mercies or Tokens for Good, that God shew'd to his Servant *David*: and because we all stand in need of, and so have reason to desire the same; our Church hath taught us to pray for them in this Petition, *O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.* By which we beseech him to give us all the necessary Blessings of this Life, to prosper all our honest Endeavours, to forgive us all our Sins, and at last to bring us to everlasting Life.

This is the *First* part of our Text, viz. the Petition put up by the Minister in the behalf of the People, *O Lord, shew thy Mercy upon us.*

The *Second* is, the People's Answer and Return to it, in these words, *And grant us thy Salvation.* Wherein we are to consider, first, the Nature of the Salvation here pray'd for, what it is; together with the Manner and Terms upon which it is granted.

For the Nature of the Salvation here pray'd for, we read in Scripture of a temporal, spiritual, and eternal Salvation. Temporal Salvation consists in a Deliverance from all temporal or corporal Evils; spiritual Salvation is from the

the Power of our ghostly or spiritual Enemies; eternal Salvation is a perfect Freedom from both for ever in Heaven.

Now all these are included in this Petition, wherein we ask, first, a temporal Salvation, or Deliverance from all the corporal Evils that may befall us here in this Life.

Of these some happen more directly to the Body, as Sicknesses and Diseases of all kinds; some betide the Estate, as Losses, Crosses, Disappointments, and the like; some happen to the Name, as Shame, Infamy, and Disgrace; and others to the Mind, as Grief and Sorrow: from all which we pray to be deliver'd, being encourag'd thereunto by many gracious Promises in Holy Scripture, of being sav'd from them. Not that we may hope to be wholly freed from these things here in this World, for they may be sometimes necessary for our Correction and Amendment; they are sent sometimes for the trial and exercise of our Graces, and tend oft-times to the Increase of our future Glory: but we are promis'd to be deliver'd from them so far, that they shall do us no real harm, but rather promote than prejudice our future Happiness. For God hath assur'd us of his Presence and Blessing, that he will be with us in Trouble, and no Evil shall approach to hurt us; but that all things shall work together for good to them that love God.

This temporal Salvation we find David often praying for in the Book of Psalms, where he beseeches God to save him from his Enemies, and from the hands of all that hate him; and frequently directs us to call upon God in the time of Trouble, assuring us that he will hear, and give us cause to praise and glorify him. But this we are to ask not absolutely, but with submission to the Divine Will, saying, as our Saviour did about the bitter Cup, *Not my Will, but thine be done.*

But beside this, there is (2.) a spiritual Salvation from our ghostly or spiritual Enemies; such as Sin, Satan, Death and Hell: these attempt upon and annoy the Soul, as the other do the Body; and therefore a Deliverance from them is more importunately to be ask'd and su'd after. Which we are the more encourag'd to pray for, from the Victory that Christ hath obtain'd for us, and promis'd to us over them; for he hath vanquish'd all our Foes both corporal and spiritual, and put all our Enemies under our feet. He hath destroy'd the Dominion of Sin in us, by the Power of



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of his Grace, so that if we yield not to it, it cannot reign in our mortal Bodies. He hath subdu'd Satan for us, and weaken'd the Force of all his Temptations; so that if we resist the Devil, he will flee from us; and if we keep our ground, we are sure to win the Field. He hath conquer'd Death for us by the power of his Resurrection; so that the Grave shall not detain our mortal Bodies, nor Hades hold our immortal Souls. Finally, to complete this Salvation, he hath deliver'd us from Hell by his triumphant Ascension into Heaven; where he is gone to prepare Mansions of Blessedness for all his Followers. And this will lead,

(3.) To that eternal Salvation, that consists in a perfect Freedom from all the Troubles of this Life, and the Torments of the next; by which we shall have an entire Victory over all Enemies ghostly and bodily, and be seated for ever in Mansions of endless Bliss and Glory. And this is chiefly the Salvation pray'd for in this Petition, *And grant us thy Salvation*; call'd his *Salvation*, because 'twas purchas'd by the Merits of Christ, obtain'd by his Mediation, and bestow'd by his Mercy: for which reason, he is said to have obtain'd eternal Redemption for us.

But how is this Salvation granted? or upon what terms may we hope for it? Why, 'tis not granted absolutely and universally to all Men, but conditionally, upon the terms of Faith and Repentance. We must believe in Christ, and take him for our Saviour, before we may reasonably expect to receive Salvation from him. There is no other Name given under Heaven, by which we can be saved, but the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And how can they look to be sav'd by that Name, who never call upon it, but to profane or blaspheme it? If there be no Salvation in any other, our recourse must be to him for it; and in that way too, in which he hath appointed to give it. He is (as the Apostle tells us) both able and willing to save to the uttermost, but 'tis only those that come unto God by him; Heb. 7. 25. Now this coming to God by Christ, implies, 1<sup>st</sup>, The coming to him by Faith in Christ: for he that believeth in him shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned; Mark 16. 16.

Again, 2<sup>dly</sup>, 'Tis a coming unto him in the ways of Duty and Obedience: for tho' he be still'd the Author of eternal Salvation, yet 'tis to those only that obey him; Heb. 5. 9.

And

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And, Lastly, 'tis a coming to him by Repentance: for *except ye repent (saith our Saviour) ye shall all likewise perish*; Luke 13. 3, 5.

Thus we see the Sense of these two Petitions; the one deliver'd by the Priest, and the other by the People: from both which we are taught, first, to beg for Mercy, before we presume to ask for Salvation, for we need Mercy to help us in the way to Salvation; neither can we hope for it by any Merits of our own, but purely from God's Mercy.

The Sum of all then is, to send us to the Throne of Grace, not only to ask for Mercy, but for some Token of it to be shew'd upon us, for our own and others Satisfaction; that all Men that see it, may know it to be his work, and perceive it to be his doing; that we may all find and feel it to be his Salvation, and thence be encourag'd daily to pray God to grant it to us, and to all his People: So shall we find Peace and Comfort at present, and at last receive the End of our Faith, and Consummation of all our Hopes, even the Salvation of our Souls: which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

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## DISCOURSE XL.

PSAL. XX. 9.

*Save, Lord; let the King hear us, when we call: Or as it is in the old Translation, Save, Lord, and hear us, O King of Heaven, when we call upon thee.*

**T**HE next short Prayer, or pious Ejaculation, utter'd by the Priest after the Lord's Prayer, is in these words; *O Lord, save the King or Queen: To which the People are taught to answer, And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.*

The words are taken out of the twentieth Psalm, which is by some stil'd, A Prayer for the King or chief Governor: where

where after many Petitions for Help and Prosperity to be bestow'd upon him; the Psalm concludes with this short devout Prayer, *Save, Lord, let the King hear us, &c.*

The words are variously render'd and understood by Interpreters: some make them a Prayer for the People, that God would save them, and make the King or Queen an instrument to help and defend them in time of danger; others, with greater probability, make them a Prayer for the King or Sovereign, that God would save and defend him; to which the People concur, by desiring God to hear them, when they call upon him in his behalf.

So the Septuagint, and most Interpreters, understand the words, reading them as they stand in our Liturgy; *Lord, save the King, and mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.* The first Clause is the same with that common form of Salutation us'd to Princes, *God save the King or Queen*; which is a hearty Wish or Prayer for their Welfare and Prosperity.

This our Church hath taught us to use, not only at the solemn times of the Inauguration or Coronation of Princes, as the Custom of all Countries is; but because the publick Happiness depends so much upon the Prince's Welfare, we make it a part of our daily Devotion, saying every day, *O Lord, save the King or Queen*: The People, at the same time, beseeching God to hear their Prayers for them. This is according to the Apostle's Direction, who exhorts, that Supplications, and Prayers, and Intercessions, and giving of Thanks be made for Kings, and all that are in Authority: which he presses with two very good Reasons; the one respecting our selves, *that we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty*, which depends much upon the Power and Prosperity of Princes; the other respects God himself, who is well-pleas'd with such Prayers, *for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*, 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2, 3. But to come to the words of our Text, as they are render'd in our Liturgy, and so they consist of two Parts. The

First pronounc'd by the Priest, *O Lord, save the King or Queen.* The

Second return'd by the People, *And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.* Of which in their Order.

And,

First,



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*Part II. Of the Minister's Part in Petitioning, O Lord, save the King or Queen.* The Salvation here pray'd for, in the behalf of Princes, is both temporal, spiritual and eternal; all which imply a freedom from all manner of Evil, and a fruition of all kind of Good, and that both in this Life, and that which is to come. As for this Life, when we say, God save the Queen, we beseech Heaven to avert or keep off all manner of Evil from her; For Princes are not here deat out of the reach of Troubles and Misfortunes; yea, their higher Station renders them sometimes but the fairer targets for Envy and Malice to shoot at: and as the tallest Cedars are most obnoxious to the Winds, so are Princes to the Storms and Tempests of Fortune; they have some open and more secret Enemies, that seek to shake or undermine their Throne, from whose Treachery nothing but the Divine Providence can be a sufficient Protection. And therefore we cannot do better Service for our Gracious Queen, than by our joint Request to obtain for her the Succour and Assistance of God Almighty, whose watchful Providence is a far better Safeguard and Security to her, than all her other Guards or Armies: *Except the Lord keep the City, (saith King David) the Watchman shall be in vain.* Now the Evils incident to Princes with other Men, are the Evils of Sin, and the Evils of Sufferings; from both which we pray God to save them.

As for the Evils of Sin, Princes have the same Inclinations, and much greater Temptations than other Men: The height of their Place, Power, Wealth, and other worldly Advantages, are apt to betray them into many a Vice; and therefore they stand in need of greater Succours of Divine Grace, to be preserv'd from the danger of such Temptations. For this then we are to address to Heaven in their behalf, that no earthly baits or allurements may hazard the Tranquillity and Salvation of their Souls, that they may be deliver'd from the danger of these Snares, and be preserv'd blameless to the Coming of our Lord.

And as Princes are not free from the Evils of Sin, so neither are they exempt from those of Sufferings, the sad Consequents of it. The Cross sits upon the Crowns of Princes; and as they wear it as a Badg of their Christianity, so must they bear it too, in token of their conformity

to their Saviour. Accordingly, we find this to have been the Lot of the greatest and wisest of Princes: *David*, a Man after God's own Heart, and a King of God's own Appointment, had a very large share of the Troubles of this Life. And the best Kings, that ever sway'd the Scepter of these Realms, have drank deepest of the Cup of Affliction: for which reason we are, upon all occasions, to deprecate the Wrath of God from falling upon them, and to make it our frequent and humble Suit, that no Evil may approach to hurt them: Which is the first degree of the Salvation here ask'd in their behalf, *viz.* O Lord, save the King from all the Evils and Calamities both of Sin and Punishment.

The Second is, for the obtaining for them all manner of Good, both Temporal and Spiritual: Tho Kings are rais'd above our Relief, our Charity and our Goodness extending not to them, yet they stand in continual need of the Divine Favour and Bounty; they lack many good things, which we may be instrumental in helping them to, by making our requests for them known unto God, and supplying them out of the immense Ocean of his Goodness: and this way the meanest Subject may oblige the greatest Monarch; for his Prayers may open for him the Store-house or Treasury of Heaven, and from thence bring down showers of Blessings upon his Head: which is such an Honour, that every good Subject should be ambitious of.

Now the good things we ask for, in the behalf of Princes, relate partly to this Life, and partly to the next. Of the first sort are long Life, Health, Honour, Wealth, Victory over Enemies, and all worldly Prosperity; for all which, we find good Men in all Ages have address'd unto God, in the behalf of Kings and Queens.

For long Life, we find *Nehemiah* thus addressing to *Artaxerxes*, *Let the King live for ever*, *Nehem. 2. 3.* So did *Daniel* to *Darius*, *O King, live for ever*; *Dan. 6. 21.* which was a customary Wish and Address made to them. The Psalmist frequently pray'd God to *grant the King a long Life*; which the Apostles and Primitive Christians did even to Heathen Emperors, and is therefore much more to be done to Christian Kings and Queens.

For Health and Safety, the Comfort and Strength of Life, we read that the People, at the Inauguration of the Kings of *Israel*, were wont to clap their Hands, and say, *God save the King*, *2 Kings 11. 12.* which our Church here

makes a part of our daily Prayer. And the Psalmist hath left a form of Petition to the same purpose: *Let the King rejoice in thy Strength, O Lord; exceeding glad let him be in thy Salvation,* Psal. 21. 1.

Moreover, the Honour of a King being one of the main Props and Pillars of his Throne, is included and implor'd in this Petition; which Honour consists not so much in the outward Ceremonies of the Cap and the Knee, as in the inward Esteem and good Wilhes of the Heart: beseeching God, that *his Glory may be great in his Salvation, and that Honour and great Worship may be laid upon him;* Psal. 21. 5.

Wealth and Power likewise are two prime Jewels of the Crown, which highly advance the Lustre, and strengthen the Beams of Majesty. These therefore we are, by the benefit of our Prayers, and other good means, to procure for them; beseeching God to fill his Coffers with Treasure, to fortify his Heart with Courage, and strengthen his Hands with Might. By this means the poorest Subject may enrich the greatest Prince, and derive down Blessings upon him; he may help in a great measure to settle the Crown upon his head, and to hold the Scepter fast in his hand; which may be well reckon'd no small Honour, but a noble and worthy piece of Service.

Lastly, For Victory over Enemies, and Success in all laudable Undertakings; that also mightily contributes to the Welfare of Prince and People, and therefore ought to be the frequent Subject of our Prayers. This was the Practice of the first and best Christians, who in all just Enterprizes crav'd a Blessing on their Emperors Forces, and congratulated the Success of their Arms. Indeed whoever loves the Church, will heartily pray for the flourishing of the Crown, because they stand and fall together; he that is a Friend to the one, cannot be a Foe to the other, since the Welfare of both is wrap'd up in one another: whoever smites the Shepherd, is an Enemy to the whole Flock, and seeks to scatter and destroy both.

Kings and Queens have Enemies at home as well as abroad, and the former are oft-times more dangerous and designing than the latter: They have more Ill-wilhes than those that draw the Sword against them; namely, such as draw the Hearts of their Subjects from them, and withdraw them from their Allegiance by Doctrines of Resistance and Disobedience. And therefore our Duty to Prin-



ces requires us to pray, in their behalf, for Victory over all their Enemies; that God would blast the Designs, and defeat the Counsels of the Wicked against them; that he would give them the Hearts of their Subjects, and the Necks of their Enemies: In a word, that he would save them from all foreign Invasions and intestine Commotions, and still preside over them for their Preservation.

These are some of the temporal Blessings we are to ask for them. Besides which, there are spiritual Mercies to be interceded for in their behalf; some whereof are enjoy'd here, and others reserv'd for hereafter.

Of the first sort, are the Assistances of God's Holy Spirit, to inspire them with Wisdom and Courage, with Counsel and the Fear of the Lord, to give them the Comforts of a good Conscience, and fill them with Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, to lighten the Burden of their Cares, and to make the Crown sit safe and easy upon their heads.

Of the latter sort, are future Glory and endless Felicity in the World to come, there to receive a Kingdom that cannot be mov'd, and to exchange an earthly fading Crown for a heavenly and eternal Crown of Glory.

These things are all imply'd in the Petition here utter'd by the Minister, *God save the King or Queen.* From whence I proceed,

*Secondly,* To the People's Answer, in these words; *And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee:* which are taken from the last words of our Text, *Hear us, O King of Heaven, when we call upon thee.* Where the King of Heaven is invoc'd to the succour of earthly Kings, who derive all their Power from him, and from whom alone they have all Assistance. And that the Petition of the Priest may be the more effectual, the People strike in with him, and join in the same Request; saying, *Lord mercifully hear us, when we call upon thee.* Which words, tho they may be extended to all the Prayers we make unto God, desiring him to lend a merciful ear to all our Petitions; yet do they seem here more particularly to refer to the Prayers offer'd up in the behalf of Princes, that he would more especially hear and answer the Requests made for their Welfare, that being a publick Blessing in which all the People partake with them: for as the Oil that was pour'd on the Head of *Aaron*, ran down to the Skirts of his Clothing, so the Blessings that our Prayers bring down on the

Heads of Princes, descend to their meanest Subjects: And as the Dew that fell upon the Hill of *Herman*, water'd and refresh'd the lower Valleys; so the Dew of God's heavenly Benediction is deriv'd from the Prince to the People, and both are refresh'd with the Comforts thereof.

Indeed, the Prosperity of the Prince is the common Welfare; in his Peace, we shall have Peace: if he be safe and easy, we then enjoy great Quietness; but if he be disturb'd or resisted, we can have no Rest or Tranquillity: his Fall, like that of the tall Cedars, shaketh the Earth, and puts the Foundations of the World out of course. And therefore we are to pray God to preserve him with the wholesome Defence of his Right Hand, to establish his Throne, and fix it as the Days of Heaven. In which Petitions all good Subjects are to join, and to say *Amen*: which was the Design of the Church, in affixing to our Request for the Queen these words; *And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee*. Where all Audience and Acceptance of our Prayers are put upon the score not of Merit, but of Mercy: for we can deserve nothing at God's hand, but depend intirely upon Favour and Kindness. Our best Deeds are attended with such Defects and Imperfections, as may rather incense, than engage him to help us: and should he deal with us with Rigour, or by the Rules of strict Justice, instead of prospering Princes and People, we should be destroy'd both we and our King. And therefore we are taught to say, *Mercifully hear us*; that is, not to deal with us according to our Deserts, but according to the multitude of his Mercies to think upon us: and that he would lend a merciful ear to our Prayers, when we call upon him either for our selves or others.

Thus we see the Sense of this pious Petition, and likewise upon what good Reason and Authority it is grounded; which we should therefore frequently put up in the behalf of Princes, and daily say as the Church directs us, *O Lord, save the Queen*. And to render it the more successful, let the People add their humble Supplication, and say, *O Lord, mercifully hear us when we call upon thee*, in their behalf. To which we have abundant Encouragement, not only from the acceptable Piety and Goodness of the Work, which the Apostle declares to be good and acceptable in the sight of God, 1 Tim. 2. 3. but from the certain End and Issue of such Petitions: for God hath promis'd to give Salvation to Kings,



*Kings, and to shew Mercy to his Anointed, and to their Seed for evermore; Psal. 18. 50.*

To draw to a conclusion; This Discourse may justify the Prudence and Piety of our Church, in prescribing Supplications and Prayers of all sorts, to be made for Kings, and all that are in Authority, that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty. This is St. Paul's express Charge to Timothy, and to all the Bishops and Pastors of the Church, to take care that the publick Offices of Devotion consist of such Prayers. And because the publick Welfare depends so much upon the Safety of the Prince, our Church hath taken great care in this matter; our publick Service abounding more in Prayers of this kind, than the Liturgies of any other Church. I know this hath been blamed by some, who are inclin'd rather to plot against than pray for their Prince, and study more to undermine than to establish their Throne. But such as these are Enemies to God and the Country, opposing the Power of the one, and the Prosperity of the other: they bear an evil will to Church and State, and seek to bring Anarchy and Confusion into both. To prevent which,

Let us all become humble Supplicants to the Throne of Grace, to avert from her Majesty all manner of Evil.

Let us be devout Orators, to obtain for her all kinds of Good, both temporal, spiritual and eternal. And,

Lastly, Let us be earnest Intercessors in her behalf, for all sorts of Succour and Direction in times of Exigence and Danger; that in cases of foreign or civil Wars, she may be bless'd with Counsel, Courage and Conduct, and all other necessary Supplies; that neither the Sinews of Men, Mony, or Arms, may be wanting to her Defence; that all her Enemies may be cloth'd with Shame, and upon her Head the Crown may still flourish: to which let all the People say *Amen.*





## DISCOURSE XLI.

## PSAL. CXXXII. 9.

*Let thy Priests be clothed with Righteousness, and let thy Saints shout for Joy: or, sing with Joyfulness.*

**A**FTER a short Prayer for the King or Queen, there follow two pious Petitions, the one for the Priest, viz. *Endue thy Ministers with Righteousness*: the other for the People, *And make thy chosen People joyful*. They are both taken out of this Psalm of David, wherein after he had declar'd his great Love to the Temple or House of God, that *he could take no rest himself, till he had found out a Resting-place for the Ark, and an Habitation for the mighty God of Jacob*; ver. 4, 5. he next shews his great Care for the Reverence and Decency of the Divine Worship perform'd in it, saying, *We will go into his Tabernacle, and fall bow on our knees before his Footstool*, ver. 7. To which end, after he had call'd upon God to be present in his Temple, and to hear from his Holy Place, saying, *Arise, O Lord, into thy Resting-place, thou and the Ark of thy Strength*; ver. 8. he prays for Holiness in the Priests, and Joyfulness in the People, in the words of the Text; *Let thy Priests be cloth'd with Righteousness, and let thy People sing with Joyfulness*. The words are suppos'd to be a part of the Jewish Liturgy, being used by Solomon at the Dedication of the Temple, as we read, 2 Chron. 6. 41. where the words are, *Let thy Priests, O Lord God, be clothed with Salvation, and let thy Saints rejoice in Goodness*. They are here inserted in our Liturgy, in words to the same purpose, viz. *Endue thy Ministers with Righteousness, and make thy chosen People joyful*. The Happiness of a Nation consists chiefly in the Safety of the Prince, the Piety of the Priest, and the Joy of the People: for all which, our Church hath order'd some pious Ejaculations to be offer'd up.

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For the Safety of the Prince, we are directed in the foregoing Vericle to say, *O Lord, save the King or Queen:* of which I treated in my last.

For the Piety of the Priest, we are here taught to say, *Endue thy Ministers with Righteousness.* And

For the Joy of the People, we are to add, *And make thy chosen People joyful.* Of which two Petitions, the one to be utter'd by the Minister, and the other by the People, I am now to treat. And I begin,

*First,* With the Minister's Part or Petition, which in the Text is, *Let thy Priests be clothed with Righteousness:* in the Liturgy it is, to the same purpose, *Endue thy Ministers with Righteousness.* In both which Expressions, there is a manifest Allusion to the holy Garments appointed for the Priests in their publick Ministrations: For we read, that *Moses* was commanded to make for *Aaron and his Sons* holy Garments, for *Glory and for Beauty*; to be worn by them when they minister'd in the Priest's Office before the Lord, *Exod. 28. 2, 3, 4, &c.* Which holy Garments signify'd that peculiar Sanctity, which was requir'd of them in their Approaches unto God. For their *Ephod* was to be made of the purest Linen, to represent their greater Purity; and upon their Breast-plate was to be engraven, *Holiness unto the Lord*, as a token of their Consecration to his Service; *ver. 36.* Now in allusion to these holy Vestments, the Psalmist prays, *Let thy Priests be clothed with Righteousness:* that is, let their Souls be array'd in the Robes of Righteousness, as their Bodies are with these holy Garments: or, as our Church hath it, *Endue thy Ministers with Righteousness*; which refers to the inward Ornaments and Endowments of the Mind, and is (as one hath well observ'd) a Prayer, that his Ministers may have Souls as pure as the Linen *Ephod*, and Lives as spotless and holy as the Garments they are cloth'd withal. But to speak more plainly and particularly of this Petition, we may observe in it,

*1st,* The Persons for whom it is offer'd up, and they are God's Ministers; *Endue thy Ministers:* And,

*2dly,* The Matter of the Petition, or what is ask'd in their behalf; and that is, for Holiness or Righteousness of Life: *Endue thy Ministers with Righteousness.* For the

*1st,* The Persons for whom this Prayer is put up, are the Priests, stil'd here the Ministers of God; *Endue thy*



*Ministers.* The Expression gives to understand, that the Clergy or Men in Holy Orders receive their Commission from God, and are properly his Ministers: This is the frequent Language of Holy Scripture, where they are stil'd sometimes his Ambassadors, sometimes his Stewards, but most frequently his Ministers or Servants. So St. Paul would have them reckon'd: *Let a Man so account of us (saith he) as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God;* 1 Cor. 4. 1. They are the Pastors or Shepherds of Christ's Flock, and the Overseers of the Church, by the appointment of the Holy Ghost. Their Commission is from God, and their Authority is divine; for which reason they are to be reputed God's Ministers, not Man's, and to be look'd upon not as the People's Servants, but Masters, Guides, and Instructors, and to be receiv'd and respected accordingly. For they are appointed to bless the People; and greater is he that gives the Blessing, than he that receives it! for *without contradiction (saith the Apostle) the less is blessed of the better,* Heb. 7. 7. In short, they are to absolve the Penitent, to counsel, to exhort, and to reprove with all Authority; which are Offices above and inconsistent with the Condition of Servants: And therefore they are often stil'd the Lord's Priests, Christ's Ministers, the Ministers of God; but never the People's Ministers: for that would degrade the Priest's Office, and make the People their Masters; which would be as absurd, as to make the Shepherd inferiour to the Sheep. Hence we find St. Paul, who was little given to Boasting, magnifying his Office, when false Brethren and Sons of Be-lial began to vilify and disparage it.

That which we may infer from hence, is the Honour and Respect due to the Person and Calling of Christ's Ministers. For being employ'd and commission'd by him, as his Ambassadors and Fellow-workers with God in the Work of Man's Salvation, they are to be honour'd for his sake, who takes all the Respect or Contempt offer'd to them as done to himself: for *he that heareth you (saith he) heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despises me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me;* Luke 10. 16. These are the Persons here pray'd for, viz. the Ministers of Christ, or Stewards of holy Mysteries.

But what is the Petition, or thing ask'd in their behalf? Why, that is for Righteousness or Holiness of Life: *Endue thy Ministers with Righteousness, or let thy Priests be clothed with*



*with Righteousness.* Which Petition was fram'd with respect to the holy Vestments ordain'd for the Priests in their publick Ministrations, as was before observ'd; that as their outward Man was deck'd and array'd with fine Linen, and other costly Ornaments, so their inward Man may be endu'd and adorn'd with Purity and the Beauty of Holiness. Indeed, no Garment so well becomes the Ministers of Christ, as the Robe of Righteousness; for that will adorn and beautify their Person and Profession, and render both fair and amiable in the sight of God and Men. This is a Garment so to be put on, as never to be taken off; for it will not decay, but improve in the wearing, and grow still more fresh and flourishing in using it. The Apostle calls it *the Breast-plate of Righteousness*, Eph. 6. 17. to shew it, to be not only Clothing, but Armour; serving at once to adorn and to defend, to guard us from the Assaults of Sin, and to quench all the fiery Darts of the Wicked.

In the Old Testament, 'tis express'd by *Urim* and *Thummim*, which signify Light and Perfection, and denote the two great Qualifications of the Priesthood, Illumination and Integrity: the one respects their Doctrine, in which there is to be the Light of Truth and Knowledge; the other respects their Life, in which there is to be Righteousness and Integrity.

The truth is, Righteousness of Life is as necessary in the Priest, as Soundness of Doctrine; the Success and Efficacy of the latter depending very much upon a due Care of the former. Sound Doctrine, without a suitable Life, will prevail but little with the People, and avail the Preacher less. He that presses Holiness on others, without Righteousness of Life in himself, tempts the World to think he does not believe his own Doctrine; for nothing can better shew Men to be in earnest, than the practice of their own Rules, and doing themselves what they press upon and prescribe to others. Wholesome Truths, back'd with pious Examples, make their own way into the Heart, and easily insinuate into the Affections of the Hearers; whereas the best Instructions, if not follow'd in our own Persons, soon go off, and leave no Impression behind them. But what is worse,

Wickedness of Life in Christ's Ministers brings Dishonour to God, and causes his Name to be blasphem'd: for Men will judg of the Person worship'd by the Lives of the Worshippers; and where these are evil, they will not think the other

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other much better. So that such Persons deal with God as *Simeon* and *Levi* did with *Jacob*; they make his Name to stink among the Inhabitants of the Land; they expose Religion to the Scorn and Scandal of all its Enemies, and render Christianity infamous even to the very Infidels. And therefore 'tis a necessary and pious Petition to pray unto God, to *endue his Ministers with Righteousness*: and that because an ungodly Life will mightily disparage their Profession, and Righteousness will highly adorn and recommend it; the one will be a Reproach, and the other a Rejoicing to any People. And this will lead me to the

*Second Part* of our Text, which is the Answer or Return to the former Petition, in these Words, *And make thy chosen People joyful*: which Words, if consider'd with relation to the foregoing, will teach us this Lesson,

That Holiness in the Priest will tend much to the Joy and Happiness of the People; for this is here added as the Effect of the former. If we consider the Words absolutely in themselves, we may learn,

That Joy and Gladness in the People is a Blessing to be earnestly desir'd and pray'd for; *Make thy chosen People joyful*. A word or two of each: And,

1<sup>st</sup>, That Holiness and Righteousness in the Priest will occasion Joy and Delight in all good People; for the Psalmist here prays for Righteousness in the Priests to promote the Joy of the People: The one is added as an Encouragement to the other; make them Righteous, and that will make us joyful: *Deck thy Priests with Health* (saith the Psalmist) *and thy Saints shall rejoice and sing*, verse 16. The Prophet *Isaiah* brings in the Church thus declaring, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my Soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the Garments of Salvation; he hath cover'd me with the Robe of Righteousness, as a Bridegroom decketh himself with Ornaments, and as a Bride adorneth herself with Jewels*; Isa. 61. 10. where the Prophet alludes to the Priestly Ornaments; which being the outward Signs of their inward Sanctity, became matter of Joy to the whole Church.

The Success of holy Ministrations depends in some measure upon the Qualifications of him that ministrETH; and as Water receives a Tincture from the Mineral thro which it passes, so doth the Word of Life appear more or less pure, from the Soundness or Corruption of him that deli-



vers it. And therefore as 'tis matter of Grief and Trouble, when the publick Prayers and Praises proceed from *polluted Lips*; so it is matter of Joy and Rejoicing, when these Sacrifices are offer'd up *with holy Hands, without Wrath and Doubting*. And consequently to make the People joyful, we are to wish and pray that the Priests may be cloth'd with Righteousness. But to consider the Words absolutely, we learn from them,

*Firstly*, That Joy and Gladness in the People is a Mercy to be highly priz'd and pray'd for. So *David* here teaches us to say, *Make thy chosen People joyful*; where by *chosen People* we are to understand Christians, or the Members of Christ's Church, who are said to be *chosen out of the World*, to be a *peculiar People* to himself. To these we are to wish all Joy and Happiness, and to do what we can to promote it: for this is well-pleasing unto God, and will make them the more easy to themselves and others. *By Sorrow of Heart* (saith *Solomon*) *the Spirit is broken*; Prov. 13. 13. Grief and Sadness depress the Spirits, and make Men unfit for the Service of God; yea, they cast a Reflection upon God, whom they serve as if he were a hard Master, and impos'd unreasonable Tasks and Burdens upon his Servants. They are a Disparagement to Religion, as if it were a sour, severe, and melancholy thing, that doom'd Men to nothing, but Sorrow and Sadness. And therefore *Nehemiah* exhorted the People, *not to be sorrowful, because the Joy of the Lord was their Strength*; Nehem. 8. 10. And the Psalmist tells us, that *the Light of God's Countenance will put more Joy and Gladness into the Heart, than the time when Corn, and Wine, and Oil increaseth*; Psal. 4. 6, 7. *St. Paul* exhorts all good Christians to *rejoice in the Lord always*; and lest they should at any time sink into Sadness, he repeats it again, *And again I say rejoice*; Phil. 4. 4. And because there are many things, both within and without, that are apt to intercept our Joy, and create Heaviness; our Church here teaches us to pray, that God would *make his People joyful*, that they may be sensible how good a Master they serve, and that his Service is so far from Slavery, that 'tis perfect Freedom. And this we are encourag'd to ask, from God's gracious Promise to *make his People joyful in his House of Prayer*; Isa. 56. 7. Joy and Rejoicing in God is by the Apostle reckon'd among the Fruits of the Spirit, Gal. 5. 22. And indeed nothing but the Holy Spirit of God can work this Divine Disposition in us. The Works  
of



of the Flesh, just before mention'd, are attended with great Perplexity and Anguish of Mind, and at last exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven; as we read in the foregoing Verses: Whereas the Fruits and Graces of the Spirit grow up into Glory, and fit us to receive that Fulness of Joy, and those Rivers of Pleasure that are at God's right Hand for evermore.

Thus we see the Sense of these two pious Ejaculations: the one for Righteousness in the Priest; the other for Joy and Comfort in the People; which will procure the Peace, and promote the Prosperity of both.

Let us then, as our Church directs, daily put up these two Petitions: making our Request,

(1.) That God would endue his Ministers with Righteousness. Let us look upon them as God's Ministers, and not the Servants and Substitutes of the People; and so count them worthy of double Honour, esteeming them highly in Love for their Works sake, and being dignify'd with the Stile of Christ's Ambassadors, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. Let us pray for Holiness and Fidelity in them to discharge those High and Sacred Offices, that they may be sound in their Doctrine, and exemplary in their Lives; and so may save themselves and those that hear them.

Instead of publishing the Faults and Failings of our Teachers, or rejoicing in their Miscarriages, as the manner of some is; let us pray for Grace to reform and amend them, that we may be edify'd by their Instructions, and receive the Benefit of their Labours and Admonitions.

(2.) Let us endeavour, as much as lies in us, to promote the Joy and Happiness of others, and to make God's chosen People joyful: Let us lighten the Burden of their Sorrows; and instead of rejoicing in their Calamities, comfort them in all their Afflictions: this not only Christianity, but common Humanity requires of us, to be well affected to our own Nature, and upon all Occasions ready to comfort and cherish our own Flesh. *A joyful Heart* (saith Solomon) *doth good like a Medicine*; Prov. 17. 22. it cures the Maladies of the Soul, and performs the Offices of Food and Physick; it puts Chearfulness into the Countenance, and revives the Spirits; yea, it recommends Religion, and invites to the Service of God, when it is perform'd with Joy and Gladness; which should teach us to cherish this Passion both in our selves and others; And

by thus serving the Lord with Gladness now, we shall e'er long be receiv'd into our Master's Joy: Which God grant, &c.



# DISCOURSE XLII.

PSAL. XXVIII. 9.

*O Lord, save thy People: And bless thine Inheritance.*

**I**N the two foregoing Versicles we pray'd for the Safety of the Prince, and for Sanctity in the Priest; and here we are taught to pray for the Salvation of the People, in these words, *O Lord save thy People*; to which they reply, *And bless thine Inheritance*: wherein they mutually and interchangeably pray for one another.

The Words are taken out of this Psalm of David, where, in he prays against his Enemies both open and secret, and blesses his Friends with publick and private Blessings; concluding the Psalm with these Words; *O Lord save thy People, and bless thine Inheritance*. The Prayer is found in most of the Liturgies of the Church, both antient and modern, from whence it was taken, and inserted in ours to this day. It consists of two Petitions; the one to be utter'd by the Minister, viz. *O Lord save thy People*; the other by the Congregation, *And bless thine Inheritance*: both which coming from God only, are here ask'd of him; for *Salvation belongeth to the Lord, and his Blessing is upon his People*; Psal. 3. 8. I shall speak something to each: And begin,

*First*, With the Minister's part, in praying for the People; saying, *O Lord, save thy People*: where the thing pray'd for is Salvation; the Persons for whom, are God's People.

The Salvation here pray'd for, is partly privative, and partly positive; the one consisting in a Freedom from all Evil, the other in the Fruition of all Good.

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The privative Part of Salvation consists in a Freedom from all Evil; that is, from the Evil of Sin, and the Evil of Suffering, the one being the Cause and Occasion of the other: and because all Sufferings are the Effects of Sin, we must be first sav'd from our Sins, before we can be sav'd from Sufferings. Here then we are to begin, and to pray to God,

1<sup>st</sup>, To save his People from their Sins; to which we are encourag'd not only from the Atonement, but from the Name of Jesus, a Saviour, which was given to him, because *he saves his People from their Sins*, Mat. 1. 21. Indeed, this was the End of his coming into the World, and of all that he did or suffer'd in it; for *he gave himself* (saith the Apostle) *to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*; Tit. 2. 14. Now this saving his People from their Sins, is from the Power, Pollution, and Punishment of them.

For the first, Sin is said to reign in the mortal Bodies of some Men, who obey it in the Lusts thereof. Their Vices have got the mastery and dominion over them, whereby they become the Servants of Sin, and Vassals to their vile Affections. *Know ye not* (saith the Apostle) *that to whom ye yield your selves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness*? Rom. 6. 16. 'Tis a known thing (saith a Learned Commentator on that place) that he who delivers himself up as a Servant or Slave to another, and actually obeys him, is to be accounted his Servant or Slave: so it is with Sinners; if they give themselves up to the Service of any Sin, and actually live in obedience to it, they make themselves Slaves to it, and become thereby under its power and dominion. And this is a Slavery far worse than the Egyptian Bondage, to be under the command and tyranny of any imperious Lust, and to be at the beck of every Temptation. And 'tis a matter worthy of our most hearty Prayers and Endeavours, to be rescu'd from this Bondage, and to be set free from such a base and ignoble Servitude: which is one thing we pray for in this Petition, *O Lord, save thy People*; that is, among other things, deliver them from the Power of Sin, and the Thralldom they are in to base Lusts and Affections.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Another thing is, to save them from the Pollution of Sin; for all Sin brings a stain and blemish upon the Soul, and defiles both the Mind and Conscience: it renders



ders both our Persons and Services loathsome and unfavoury in the Nostrils of God, and leaves such an indelible Blot behind it, that nothing, but the Blood of Christ and the Tears of Repentance can wash away. And because 'tis an unspeakable Mercy to be purg'd and refin'd from these Impurities, we pray God to save and preserve his People from the Pollution of them. So we find David did, *Psal. 51.* where he prays, *ver. 2. Wash me thoroughly from my Wickedness, and cleanse me from my Sin:* and *ver. 7. Purge me with Hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than Snow.*

3dly, We pray God here to save his People, as from the Power and Pollution, so from the Punishment of Sin; that is, from all the Evils and Miseries that attend it here in this Life and the next, which are very many and great in both. In this Life, 'tis attended with many Sickneses and Diseases in the Body; many Sorrows and Troubles in the Mind; many Losses and Crosses in the Estate; many Reproaches and Disgraces in the Name: all which are the sad Effects of Sin, and the just Punishments that betide it here in this World.

In the World to come, there are far more and greater; for there we read of Damnation, and Torments that are endless, easeless, and remediless; where the Worm of Conscience never dies, and the Flames of Hell never go out. *The Wages of Sin is Death*, saith the Apostle; and that not only temporal and spiritual Death, but Death everlasting and world without end: all which are as due to Sin, as Wages to an Hireling; and without Repentance and Pardon will be certainly paid to it to all eternity.

Now this Petition, *O Lord, save thy People*, relates to the saving them from their Sins, and from all the Miseries and Punishments that attend it here or hereafter. This is the privative part of this Salvation, which consists in a perfect Freedom and Deliverance from all the Evils both of Sin and Suffering.

The positive part of it consists in the Fruition of all manner of Good, that our Natures are capable of; and that is chiefly in the Vision and Enjoyment of God, who is the Sum and Center of all Felicity: for in him are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge; in his Presence is Fullness of Joy, and at his Right Hand are Pleasures for evermore: The Enjoyment whereof is the top or height of all our Happiness. Indeed, this Salvation is too big to be conceived,

ceiv'd, and too great to be express'd: The Apostles, in attempting to describe it, break out into Extasy and Rapture, and are swallow'd up with Wonder and Amazement. *Behold! what manner of Love is this (saith St. John) where with the Father hath loved us!* And St. Paul, like one at a loss, tells us, that *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive, the great things that God hath laid up for them that love and fear him.* For which reason our Church here wisely teaches us to pray and prepare for this great Salvation.

But who are the Persons for whom we pray, or the People for whom this Salvation is prepar'd? Why, 'tis not promiscuously for all; for all Men have not Faith to believe or desire these things, without which 'tis impossible to obtain them: but the Petition restrains it to God's People; 'tis, *O Lord, save thy People.* Tho all Men in a large sense may be said to be his People, as being all the Works of his Hand, and the Sheep of his Pasture; yet he hath a more especial and particular relation to his chosen and faithful ones. To these he is more eminently said to be their God, and they to him a People; and 'tis to all, and only these, that this Salvation belongs.

Indeed, the *Jews* were once the only People of God; they were selected from the rest of the World, to be a peculiar People unto him, being the Darlings of his Care and Providence: they had a Partition-Wall to separate and distinguish them from the *Gentiles*, who were excluded from the Privileges of the Temple, being Aliens and Out-casts from the Commonwealth of *Israel*. But God hath now enlarg'd his Flock, and taken the *Gentile* World into the number of his People: *They that were afar off, are now brought nigh by the Blood of his Cross.* So that now we pray for the whole Christian World, who are adopted into his Family, and number'd among his People.

But yet 'tis not all of these that will be Partakers of this Salvation: for tho the Merits of Christ's Satisfaction be sufficient for all Mankind, yet they are effectual only to those that believe and obey him; these being the Terms upon which alone this Salvation is granted. For tho Christ is said to be *able to save to the uttermost*, yet 'tis only them that by Faith *come to him*; Heb. 7. 25. And when Christ is said to be the *Author of eternal Salvation*, 'tis always confin'd to them that obey him; Heb. 5. 9. These are the People to whom this Salvation belongeth, and for whom alone

we pray, in saying, *O Lord, save thy People*; the First part of our Text, utter'd by the Minister.

The Second is deliver'd by the People, who reply, *And bless thine Inheritance*. Where 'twill be requisite to enquire who are meant by God's *Inheritance*, and what is meant by his  *blessing*  of them. For the

1<sup>st</sup>, *Inheritance* is sometimes understood of Lands and Tenements; so the Land of *Canaan* was said to be divided among the *Israelites* by *Inheritance*, as we read in the Book of *Joshua*. And 'tis usual with us to speak of Lands of *Inheritance* to this day, to signify the manner of holding them, or the Tenure whereby we possess them; which is not by a Lease of Lives, or any Term of Years, but by an indefeasible Right for ever. Again, *Inheritance* is sometimes and frequently in Scripture apply'd to Persons as well as Things: Thus we read, that God Almighty chose Jacob for his *Inheritance*, and Israel for his own Possession; Deut. 32. 9. Hence the Lord is said to be the Portion of his People, and Jacob the Lot of his *Inheritance*. Among these, the Tribe of *Levi* was more particularly singled out for his *Inheritance*: so God himself tells them, *I am thy Part and thine Inheritance among the Children of Israel*, Numb. 18. 20. For they having no part in the Division of the Land, God gave them all the Tenth in Israel for their *Inheritance*, for the Service which they serv'd, even the Service of the Tabernacle of the Congregation; ver. 21. For which reason, the Tribe of *Levi* is often in Scripture stil'd, *The Lot of God's Inheritance*. So that tho all the Jewish Nation were in a large sense his *Heritage*, and his peculiar People; yet the *Levites*, who were set apart for the Service of the Temple, were his more immediate Care, being appointed to be his Servants and Superintendents over the rest; upon which account God made a more particular and ample Provision for them above all the other Tribes: the lessening or with-holding any part whereof, is declar'd to be the greatest Robbery and Sacrilege committed against God himself, and is attended with the sorest and severest Curse we read of in Holy Scripture; Mal. 3. 8, 9, &c.

Indeed, these Privileges and this Provision were at first peculiar to the Jewish Nation, and extended no farther: for in Jewry was God known (saith the Psalmist) and his Name was great in Israel; at Salem was his Tabernacle, and his Dwelling-place in Zion. He shew'd his Word unto



Jacob, and his Statutes unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with other Nations, neither have the Heathens the knowledge of his Laws. Psal. 76. 12. & 147. 19. But since that, God who promis'd to his Son the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for his Possession; hath carry'd the knowledge of Himself and his Ways much farther, and now all Nations may see the Salvation of God. All the Kingdoms of the Earth are now become the Kingdoms of Christ, and all their Crowns are subjected to the Banner of his Cross. So that the whole Christian World are now as much the People of God, as the Jewish Nation were of old; and all the Ministers of Christ under the Gospel, are equally the Lot of his Inheritance with the Priests and Levites under the Law. And thus we see whom we are to understand by God's Inheritance, and that the People's praying God to bless it, is an interchangeable Petition for a Blessing on Christ's Ministers.

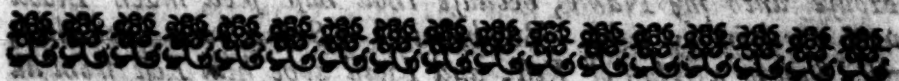
But what is meant by desiring God to bless them? or how is God said to bless his Inheritance? Why, to bless is in general to multiply all manner of Good upon any Person; 'tis to give Grace and Glory, and to withhold nothing that may conduce to his Happiness and Salvation. More particularly, to desire God to bless his Inheritance, is to pray him to prosper his Church and People, to give Success to their Affairs, and to preserve them from all the Evils of this Life and the next. To bless and to prosper, are in Scripture-Language one and the same: *They shall prosper that love thee* (saith the Psalmist) that is, they shall be blessed in their deed, as many as bear a good-will to Zion: *Peace shall be within their Walls, and Prosperity within their Palaces*; God will be with them, and whatsoever they do shall prosper. *Lo! thus shall the Man be blessed that feareth the Lord.* And now,

Having explain'd the Meaning of these two Petitions, it remains that we daily offer them up with Fervency and true Devotion.

Let us then heartily beseech God to save his People, to keep them from all the Evils of this World, and to bring them at last to everlasting Life. To which end, let us lay aside all Guile and Hypocrisy, and Envy and Evil-speaking, with all Malice; for these things imbitter Mens Spirits, sour their Minds, and fill them with Grudges and ill Wishes one towards another. And instead of them, let us labour for the contrary Vertues of Love, Meekness, Long-suffering,

suffering, Bowels of Mercy and Compassion: these things will incline us to pity, to pray for, and to promote each other's Salvation.

Lastly, Let us pray to God to bless his Inheritance, and particularly the Clergy, whom he hath stild the Lot of his Inheritance; that God would bless them with Abilities and Qualifications suited to the Work and Dignity of their Calling; and likewise that he would bless their Labours with Success, that the Word of God in their mouths may not return empty, but accomplish the End for which it was sent. Which Blessings are best obtain'd by Holiness in the Priests, and Humility in the People; and this will bring both to Happiness and Salvation at last: Which God of his infinite mercy grant, for the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.



## DISCOURSE XLIII.

1 CHRON. XXII. 9. latter part.

*I will give Peace and Quietness unto Israel in his days.*

Together with EXOD. XIV. 14.

*The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*

**H**AVING in the foregoing Sentences pray'd for the Salvation of Prince, Priest, and People, we are taught in the next Versicle, to pray for Peace, as the way and means to obtain it, and that we may find and feel the Comfort of it in our days; in these words, *Give Peace in our time, O Lord:* to which is added a good reason, *Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.* I shall speak to both these from the two fore-mention'd Portions of Scripture, beginning,

*First, With the Petition to be utter'd by the Priest, Give Peace in our time, O Lord: which we are encourag'd*



to ask, from the gracious Promise in the Text ; *I will give Peace and Quietness unto Israel in his days.*

The words were spoken to *David*, concerning the peaceable Reign of his Son *Solomon*. The Occasion of them, as the foregoing Verses shew, was from *David's* foretelling the building of the Temple for a House unto the Lord, and preparing all the Materials for so great and magnificent a Work ; for he hew'd out the Stones, and cut down Cedar-Trees for the Building, and prepar'd Gold, and Silver, and Brass in great abundance : but while he was making this Preparation, he call'd for his Son *Solomon*, and charg'd him to build this House for the Lord God of Israel ; withal telling him, That it was in his mind to build an House unto the Name of the Lord his God. But the Word of the Lord came to him, saying, *Thou hast shed Blood abundantly, and made great Wars ; thou shalt not build an House unto my Name, because thou hast shed much Blood upon earth in my sight. But behold ! a Son is born unto thee, who shall be a Man of Rest, and I will give him Rest from all his Enemies round about ; for his Name shall be Solomon : which signifies Peace.* And then it follows ; *I will give Peace and Quietness unto Israel in his days.* From whence our Church hath taken this Petition, *Give Peace in our time, O Lord.*

The Words consider'd relatively in their dependence on the foregoing, plainly shew God Almighty's great abhorrence of War, and shedding of Blood ; for he would not suffer the Man after his own Heart to build him an House, because *he was a Man of War, and shed much Blood ;* 1 Chron. 28. 3. By which we see, how unlike those are unto God, and how unfit to be call'd his Children or Servants, that delight in War, and make a trade of shedding of Blood. *Destruction and Unhappiness are in their ways (as the Psalmist describes them) their Feet are swift to shed Blood ; the way of Peace they have not known, there is no Fear of God before their eyes.* Indeed, both the Fabrick and Service of the Temple go on but slowly in times of War, and more Churches are destroy'd than edify'd by Men of Blood ; for which reason, our Church teaches us, to make it our daily Petition, *Give Peace in our time, O Lord.* In treating whereof, I shall consider,

1<sup>st</sup>, The many Promises God hath made of giving Peace. And,

2<sup>dly</sup>, The Encouragement we have from thence to ask it of him.

1<sup>st</sup>, I



1st, I say, we read of many Promises of God's giving to Prince and People the Blessing of Peace : so he did here to Solomon, in the words of our Text ; *I will give Peace and Quietness unto Israel in his days* : meaning, that they should have a freedom from all molestation either from foreign or domestick Enemies. The same Promise was made to Hezekiah, which made him say, *There shall be Peace and Truth in my days*, Isa. 39. 8. And this carry'd him on with comfort under all other Discouragements, that he should live and die in peace ; the Goodness whereof he thankfully acknowledges, saying, *Is it not good, if Peace and Truth be in my days?* 2 Kings 20. 19. The good King Josias had likewise the same Promise, That he should be gather'd to his Fathers, and go to his Grave in peace ; and that his Eyes should not see the Evils, that were after coming upon the Kingdom : 2 Kings 22. 20.

But here we may observe, that the Promises made to these good Kings extended only to their Days ; for tho' their Righteousness secur'd Peace to them for their time, yet their Failings were sometimes punish'd in their Posterity, and the Wickedness of their Children brought Wars and Captivity upon them. An Instance hereof we have in the good King Hezekiah, who for his Piety was rewarded with *Peace and Truth in his days* : but Manasses, his Son, who succeeded him, was punish'd for his Idolatry ; and for worshipping the Gods of the Heathen, was deliver'd up into the hands of his Enemies, and became a Prey and a Spoil to them ; as we read, 2 Kings 21. 11, 14.

David indeed enlarges this Promise to all God's People, saying, *The Lord shall give Strength unto his People, the Lord shall give his People the Blessing of Peace* ; Psal. 29. 10. But that is meant only of such as live in Duty and Obedience to him ; for as for those that work Wickedness (saith he) *the Lord shall lead them forth with the Evil-doers, but Peace shall be upon Israel* : Psal. 125. 5. For the Transgressions of a Land, many are the Princes thereof, saith Solomon, Prov. 28. 2. meaning, that the Wickedness and Rebellion of the People make great Changes and Disturbances in Government ; it turns Monarchy into Anarchy, or Democracy and a Commonwealth, where as there are many Rulers, so do they lay on many Burdens, and cause them to groan under grievous Oppressions. The Promise of Peace is made only to good Princes and obedient People, whom God hath engag'd to bless and prosper, and to give them

Peace in their days: But *Peace is far from the Ungodly* (saith the Psalmist), *because they keep not thy Law. There is no Peace to the Wicked, saith my God; Isa. 57. 21.*

The largest Promise of this kind, that was ever made to any, was to *David* and to his Seed for evermore; for God promis'd to *establish his Throne for ever*, that his *Hand should hold him fast*, and his *Arm should strengthen him*, so that the *Enemy should not be able to do him violence*, nor the *Son of Wickedness approach to hurt him*; for he would *smite down his Foes before his face*, and *plague them that hated him*. In a word, that in his time *Mercy and Truth should meet together*, and *Righteousness and Peace should kiss each other*. But yet 'tis added, *If his Children break my Laws, and walk not in my Judgments; if they forsake my Ways, and keep not my Commandments, I will visit their Offences with the Rod, and their Sin with Scourges: Psal. 89. 31, 32.*

So that the Promises of Peace are not absolute, but conditional: We must first make our peace with God by *Holiness and Obedience*, before we can be at quiet with Men. Our ways must *please the Lord*, before he will *make our Enemies to be at peace with us*: for without observing the Condition, we shall never obtain the Blessing.

But still there are many gracious Promises of Peace and Prosperity made to us upon easy and reasonable terms; which may, in the next place, give us abundant encouragement to ask it: for *he is faithful that hath promis'd*, and cannot falsify or fail of his Word. And therefore we may boldly go to him, and say, *Give peace in our time, O Lord.* And indeed the Goodness of Peace, as well as God's Readiness to grant it, may prompt us to ask it for our time. For Peace is such a comprehensive Blessing, as includes in it all other Blessings; and to wish peace to any House or Country, is to wish them all that is good or desirable. What Health is to the natural Body, that is Peace to the Body politick; it's Life, and Breath, and all things. 'Tis Peace that gives the taste or relish to all the Comforts of Life, without which they are all insipid, and nothing can be freely or securely enjoy'd. This hath mov'd all pious Princes and People in all Ages to desire Peace in their days, and to keep off Rebellions and Invasions for their time. Thus did *David* and *Solomon*, who not only pray'd themselves, but put others upon praying for the Peace of *Jerusalem*, that both Church and State might flourish in their days; and succeeding Generations did the same:



same: which shews this to be the general Wish of all good Men, to live in Peace, to pass their time in Rest and Quietness, and to be deliver'd from all the Miseries and Calamities of War.

This is the Sense of the Promise in the Text, of God's giving Peace and Quietness unto *Israel* in *Solomon's* days; and this is the Meaning of the Petition in the Liturgy, wherein we beg the same for ours, saying, *Give peace in our time, O Lord.*

But we have here another Motive or Argument to enforce this Petition, appointed to be utter'd by the People; and that is taken from our sole Dependence upon God to effect this for us, in these words: *Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.*

The words, tho not in express terms found in Scripture, yet the Sense and Truth of them may be gather'd from many places in it. *Moses* told the *Israelites*, that the Lord should fight for them, and they should hold their peace; *Exod. 14. 14.* that is, that God himself would be their Leader, to go before them, and fight their Battels for them, and therefore they should hold their peace from all murmuring or complaining Language: for tho they had none other to fight for them but God only, being under the Oppression and Tyranny of *Pharaoh* and his cruel Task-masters, yet God was able, and would deliver them with his high Hand and outstretched Arm.

The *Jews* were indeed a querelous and murmuring People, apt upon all occasions, yea, many times upon no occasion, to complain and speak against God. They complain'd of Hunger with Meat in their mouths, and were afraid of Want when they had Quails from Heaven, and were fed with Angels Food. Upon every appearance of Difficulty or Danger, they were apt to despond, and their Souls fainted in them. Now to remove all such Fears, *Moses* tells them, that God himself would fight for them, and scatter all their Enemies; and so they might well cease from all despairing and distrustful Complaints. The Lord your God will be your Defence; *He it is* (saith *Joshua*) *that fighteth for you*: and whatever Opposition may rise against you, it shall not prevail; for he can make one of you to chase a thousand, if you put your Trust in him: *Josh. 23. 10.* And therefore God told *Jehoshaphat*, when the Enemy came against him, that *he need not fight*



*in this Battel, but only stand still and see the Salvation of God; bidding them not to fear or be dismay'd, for the Lord was with them, 2 Chron. 20. 17. And David ascrib'd all his Victories to God only, saying, With his own Right Hand, and with his holy Arm hath he gotten himself the Victory; Psal. 98. 2. Hence our Church, in praying for Peace, teaches us to acknowledg and urge this as a Motive; Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.*

But here it may be ask'd, when we have rais'd great Armies by Land, and prepar'd great Fleets by Sea, and both ready to fight for us; how can we truly say, *There is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O Lord?* Why, very well; for none can fight effectually or to any purpose for us, but God only: all other Forces without him are but Weakness and Vanity, he is our only Safe-guard and Defence against our Enemies, and all Success and Victory must come intirely from him. 'Tis true indeed, God doth not fight immediately from Heaven for us, nor scatter our Foes by Miracles, but works by Means and the Influence of second Causes, and so earthly Forces must be used; but yet these are all from him, they fight under him, and owe all their Power and Strength to him: *A Horse is but a vain thing to save a Man* (saith the Psalmist) and as vain too is the Help of Man: *Our Help cometh from him who made Heaven and Earth.* 'Tis the Lord of Hosts that fights our Battels for us, or else we should soon flee before our Enemies: *Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.* All our Safety and Success proceed only from his Help and Blessing: *Our Fathers got not the promised Land in possession by their own Sword* (saith David) *neither was it their own Arm that helped them, but thy right Hand and thine Arm, and the Light of thy Countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them; Psal. 44. 3, 4.* And therefore, for himself, he adds; *I will not trust in my Bow, it is not my Sword that shall help me, but it is thou that savest us from our Enemies, and puttest them to confusion that hate us; ver. 7, 8, &c.* In short, this Expression in our Prayers, *There is none that fighteth for us, but only thou, O Lord;* is not to be taken literally or strictly, so as to exclude the Concurrence of all human Power, or to countenance the Neglect of all warlike Preparations, and to leave such matters to the immediate Disposal of Divine Providence without the use of  
any

any means; for this is according to the Proverb, to lie in the ditch, and only cry, God help, which will bring none out. But the words are to be understood comparatively, viz. that no Forces are of any avail in competition with, or in opposition to him. All Armies and Navies are insignificant, as well without as against him, and all our Security and Success wholly depend upon his Presence and Blessing.

The Expression was indeed literally true in the primitive Times, when the Christians lived under Heathen Emperors; for then all earthly Powers were against them, and they had none to fight for them, but God only. The Principles of their Religion would not suffer them to fight themselves against their Governours, tho in their own Defence: The only Weapons they made use of, were *Prayers and Tears*, with which they beseech'd God to espouse their Cause, and to fight for them, relying wholly upon his Succours. And God was pleas'd by the extraordinary Methods of his Providence to appear for them, to subdue their Enemies, and to vanquish all the Opposition made against them.

Sometimes the Enemies of Truth may be so potent and numerous, as to be above the Resistance of earthly Powers; in which case God alone is our Defence, and he only fighteth for us. Thus it was in the days of *Athanasius*, when all the World was against him, and he had none but God and a good Cause to stand by him; and yet these prevail'd to the silencing of Error, and settling Peace and Truth in his days.

And now that God hath rais'd up Christian Kings and Queens to embrace Christianity, and employ their Forces to defend it, to be nursing Fathers and nursing Mothers to his Church; yet still none but God can successfully fight for us, and to his Aid and Blessing alone do we owe all our Peace and Prosperity. So that the Force of this Argument lies in our intire Dependence on the Succours of Divine Providence.

And now from this Discourse we may learn, daily and devoutly to put up this Petition, *Give peace in our time, O Lord*. The Welfare of Prince and People are bound up in Peace, and neither of them can be easy or happy without it; which should engage us to make this the frequent Subject of our Prayers. This our Church teaches us to do,  
and

and God Almighty by many Promises hath encourag'd us to do the same; and we have seen many Examples of those that have obtain'd and enjoy'd it by this means. 'Tis God that creates Peace to him that is afar off and to him that is near, and healeth the Breaches of both; he puts a stop to foreign Wars, and suppresses all intestine Commotions; he it is that maketh Men to be of one Mind in a House, and unites the Hearts of Kingdoms; and therefore to him must our recourse be for this Blessing of Peace. They who rely upon their own Strength, or trust to their own Preparations, care not to seek to God for Peace; because they think themselves able to awe their Enemies into Peace, or make advantage by the War: which provokes God to blast their Designs, and defeat all their Enterprizes. But we who trust not in the Arm of Flesh, but put our whole Confidence in God, desire him to give us that Peace, which we cannot give or make for our selves; there being none that fighteth for us to any purpose, but God only: and that will procure Peace for us, when 'tis deny'd to others.

Wherefore let us endeavour to engage God on our side, who is the best Bulwark and Tower of Defence against our Enemies. *If God be for us* (saith the Apostle) *who can be against us?* But if he be against us, it matters not who or how many are for us; for there is no Might, or Wisdom, or Counsel against him. To rely upon our selves, is to forsake God; and that will tempt him to forsake us, and leave us to fall by our own Arrogance.

Let us not then trust in our own Bow, nor rely upon our Sword; but rather let us disclaim all human Power and Policy, and cast our selves upon the Divine Power and Protection: and then God will either keep off War from us, or give us Success in it; which will end in Peace both here and hereafter: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XLIV.

PSAL. LI. 10, 11.

*Make me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me: Cast me not away from thy Presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.*

**T**HE last pious Ejaculation that is appointed to follow the Lord's Prayer, is in these words, *O God, make clean our Hearts within us*; to signify the Purity of Heart and Mind that is to attend that Divine Prayer. And because this cannot be without the gracious Influence of God's Holy Spirit to cleanse and purify it, 'tis added, *And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.*

Of this I shall treat from these words of the Psalmist; *Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me: Cast me not away from thy Presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* The Words are taken out of this famous penitential Psalm of David, wherein he passionately bewails his two great and heinous Sins of Murder and Adultery; the one committed on the Person of Uriah, and the other of Bathsheba: of both which he earnestly deprecates the Guilt, and heartily begs the Pardon and Forgiveness. And because he had thereby brought defilement and disorder upon his whole Man, he beseeches God, in the words of the Text, to *create in him a clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within him*; which he begs may continue, and not be taken away from him.

Our Church hath here cast the whole Sense of them into two Petitions, the one to be spoken by the Minister, *O God, make clean our Hearts within us*; the other to be return'd by the People, *And take not thy Holy Spirit from us*: of which particularly.

And First, of the Minister's part, *O God, make clean our Hearts within us*: express'd in the Text, *Create in us a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within us.* And here 'twill be requisite to enquire,

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1st, What

1<sup>st</sup>, What is meant by a *clean Heart*.

2<sup>dly</sup>, What by a *right Spirit*. And,

3<sup>dly</sup>, What by *creating in us* the one, and *renewing* the other. By which we shall see where and how both may be had, and likewise what great reason we have to pray for them.

1<sup>st</sup> then, What is meant by a *clean Heart*. In answer to which we must note, that by Heart here we understand not that fleshly part of our Substance, that is commonly so call'd; being seated in the Breast, and distinguish'd from the other Parts and Members of the Body. But by Heart here is meant that spiritual part of us, which is call'd the Soul, together with all the Powers and Faculties of it. And consequently, the making a clean Heart within us, signifies not the cleansing of any bodily part, but the purging of the Soul, and the refining it from all Corruption.

Now this asking a clean Heart, supposes a former Filth and Uncleaness, or else there were no need of cleansing or purging it away. And indeed this will appear to be a sad Truth, if we consider the original Corruption of our Natures by the Sin of our first Parents, and likewise the Pollution contracted since by our actual Transgressions; by both which the Heart is become a *Cage of Uncleaness*, for 'tis *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?* as the Prophet *Jeremy* describes it, *chap. 17. 9. Out of the Heart* (saith our Saviour) *proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, False Witness, Blasphemies*; *Mat. 15. 19.* By which means the Mind and Conscience is defil'd, yea, the whole Soul is become a Sink of Filthiness, that is continually exhaling and sending forth the noisom Scent and Vapour of carnal Concupiscence. And from this Fountain of Uncleaness, flow all the Impurities of Mens Lives and Actions.

Now a clean Heart is a Heart purg'd from all this Defilement, a Heart wash'd from our original Corruption in the Waters of Baptism, and cleans'd from all actual Pollution by the Tears of Repentance and godly Sorrow. This is a clean Heart, which is indeed a Jewel of great price.

But, 2<sup>dly</sup>, What is meant by a *right Spirit*, which is here likewise pray'd for? Why, by that is meant a Spirit or Mind free from all Disorder, and set right in all its Faculties: the Understanding knowing and judging of things aright; the Will chusing and refusing as it ought; the Affections



fections plac'd upon right Objects, and kept within due Bounds and Measures; and so in all things rightly dispos'd, according to the Will of God. This is in Scripture said to be another Spirit different from that of the World, which lusteth to Envy and all Unrighteousness. *Numb. 14. 24.* Caleb is said to have another Spirit from the rest of the *Israelites*, whereby he follow'd God fully, and was rewarded accordingly: meaning, that he was a Man of a better Disposition, and had a more yielding, tractable, and obedient Heart than the rest of the People. Of *Daniel* it is said, that an excellent Spirit was in him, *Dan. 5. 12.* that is, he had a more noble, knowing, and elevated Spirit, that enabled him to see farther, and carry'd him higher than other Men. In short, a right Spirit is a firm, constant, and stable Spirit; a Spirit resolv'd and settled to please God, and to walk uprightly before him. 'Tis oppos'd to a light, wavering, and unstable Spirit, that is not rightly affected towards God and his ways, but is upon every Temptation drawn aside, and carry'd away from both: whereas a right Spirit is fix'd in his Duty, and resolves with *Joshua*, that whatever others do, he and his House will serve the Lord. This is briefly a right Spirit. But,

3dly, What is it to create in us such a clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within us? Why! Creation, you know, is the Work of a Divine and Almighty Power; for 'tis the making of something out of nothing, which is above the reach of any finite and created Being, and which none but God can do: And therefore the Psalmist's begging God to create this clean Heart in him, is a plain Acknowledgment that 'twas not in his own or any human Power to effect it for him. He that made the Heart, is alone able to mend it; the doing whereof is therefore stil'd a new Creation, it being from nothing, or rather from such Impurity and Defilement, that render it worse than nothing. The Heart thus cleans'd and chang'd, is by the Apostle call'd God's Workmanship, and a new Creature; *2 Cor. 5. 17.* If any Man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new Creature; old things are pass'd away, and all things are become new. By this the Heart is new moulded and fashion'd over again, and transform'd into quite another thing than what it was before; and that by the same creating Power of God that brought the beautiful Frame of the World out of a dark and unform'd Chaos. 'Tis elsewhere express'd, by putting off the Old Man, which is

corrupt



corrupt according to deceitful Lusts, and putting on the New Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness; Eph. 4. 22, 23. This is there likewise call'd, *The renewing the Spirit of the Mind*; and elsewhere the *walking before him in Newness of Life*: which being the Work of God only, the Psalmist here prays him to create this clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within him.

But are we not call'd upon to make us new Hearts and new Spirits; as if it were in our power to do both? Ezek. 18. 31. Yes; but those words signify not so much what we can, as what we should do. The Prophet wills us to do our part towards it; which is to desire, to pray, and endeavour for such a new Heart and new Spirit: and then God will not be wanting on his part to give us that which we so much need and desire. He who worketh in us both to will and to do, will work this great Work in us and for us.

But how doth God make this clean Heart, and renew this right Spirit within us? Why! this he doth not immediately by an over-ruling and irresistible Power; but he works by Means, and requires the Concurrence of our Desires and Endeavours in order to the effecting it.

Now the Means by which God works this in us, are both outward and inward. The outward Means are his Holy Word and Sacraments. For the

First, The Word of God is of a cleansing and sanctifying Nature: *Now are ye clean* (saith our Saviour) *through the Word that I have spoken unto you*; John 15. 3. and *Sanctify them thro thy Truth, thy Word is Truth*; John 17. 17. *Wherewithal shall a young Man cleanse his Way?* (saith Holy David) and then answers it, *By ruling himself according to thy Word*; Psal. 119. 9. The Word of the Lord is pure, not only from all Mixture of Falshood and Corruption, but for its Efficacy in purifying the Soul, and making the Heart clean within us: *The Law of the Lord* (saith the Psalmist) *is an undefiled Law, converting the Soul*; *the Statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the Heart*; *the Commandments of the Lord are pure, and enlighten the Eyes*; *the Fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever*: Psal. 19. 7, &c.

And as the Word of God, so the Holy Sacrament tends to the cleansing and renewing the Heart. Thus St. John tells us, *the Blood of Christ* there offer'd for us *cleanseth us from all Sin*, 1 John 1. 7. By eating his Flesh and drinking his Blood in the holy Sacrament, our sinful Bodies are made clean

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clean by his Body, and our Souls are wash'd thro his most precious Blood; by which means we are made to dwell in him, and he in us. These are the outward Means which God useth in making us a clean Heart, and renewing a right Spirit within us.

The inward Means he makes use of for that purpose, are the Influences of his Holy Spirit, by which he applies the Efficacy of the Word and Sacraments to the Heart and Spirit, and renders them effectual to the cleansing and renewing of both. So St. Paul told the *Corinthians*, that they who were before defil'd and polluted with filthy Lusts, were after wash'd and sanctify'd in the Name of Christ, by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 6. 11. Thus having explain'd the Minister's part, and shew'd how God makes a clean Heart within us, by the Assistance of his Spirit;

I proceed, in the next place, to the People's part, which is a Petition infer'd from the former, *And take not thy Holy Spirit from us*: For the removing of that, will leave all the Foulness and Impurities of our Nature upon us, and that will leave us in the Gall of Bitterness, and the Bond of Iniquity.

But for the better understanding of this Petition, we must note, That this Holy Spirit is in Scripture set to signify not only the Person of the Holy Ghost, but likewise the blessed Influences, Offices, and Operations of it upon the Minds of Men: that the Gifts, and Graces, and Joys of the Holy Ghost, are in the Holy Scriptures often express'd by the name of Spirit. And as the Continuance of these things is a great Mercy and Blessing, fit to be implor'd and ask'd by all good Christians: so the Removal of them is a great Infelicity, to be deplor'd and pray'd against by all that wish well to their Souls. And this is what is here deprecated in this Petition, *Take not away thy Holy Spirit from us*: that is,

1<sup>st</sup>, Take not the Graces of thy Holy Spirit from us. By these we understand those spiritual Aids and Assistances, that God is pleas'd to afford to his own People against the Power of their Corruptions; which are in Sacred Writ frequently express'd and signify'd by God's Holy Spirit. Of this kind are the Graces of Faith, Hope, Charity, Repentance, and the like; together with Strength against Sin, and a Power to overcome all its Temptations. These spiritual Aids and Assistances David here prays that God would



would continue and not take from him: he knew his own natural Impotence and Inability of serving God by reason of his Sin, and that all the power of doing good proceeded intirely from his Holy Spirit; which he therefore begs might not be deny'd to or with-held from him: and our Church here teaches us to do the same.

Indeed, this Holy Spirit is the choicest Blessing that God hath to bestow upon his Children; *I will pour out my Spirit upon them* (saith he) when he promis'd to bless his People, Acts 2. 17. *Because ye are Sons* (saith St. Paul) *God sent forth his Spirit into your Hearts, to enable you to cry Abba, Father.* And as the having of this, is the greatest Blessing that we can receive, so to be depriv'd of it is the sorest Curse or Judgment that can befall us; for such are given up for lost, to whom it is said, *My Spirit shall no longer strive with them*: nothing then remains but a fearful Expectation of Judgment and fiery Indignation to be pour'd out upon them. To prevent which, our Church makes it a daily Petition, that God would not withdraw the Graces of his Holy Spirit from us.

2dly, We pray here, that God would not take the Gifts of his Holy Spirit from us. By these we understand the Abilities and Endowments of Body and Mind, which God gives to fit and enable us for that Place or Office to which he is pleas'd to call us. In this sense likewise the word *Spirit* often occurs in Holy Scripture; where we read of the Spirit of God coming upon Othniel, upon Gideon, upon Jephtha and Samson, and others in the Book of Judges. By which is meant the Gifts, with which God enabled them for that Rule and Government to which he had assign'd them. Thus the Skill given to Bezaleel and Ahaliab of working in the Temple, is call'd *the Spirit of God, a Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, and an excellent Spirit*, Exod. 31. When Samson lost his Strength by the Subtilty of Dalilah, 'tis said, *the Spirit of God departed from him*, Judg. 16. 20. meaning, that the Gift by which he was enabled to govern, and to do great things, was taken from him. When God call'd Saul to be King over Israel, 'tis said, that *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him*, and he had *another Heart and another Spirit*, 1 Sam. 10. 6, 9. By which was meant those princely Gifts and Excellencies that God gave him to qualify him for that Regal Dignity, to which he had advanc'd him. But when God, for his Disobedience, took away those Gifts and Abilities

with



with which he had adorn'd him, 'tis said, *the Spirit of the Lord, departed from him, and an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him*; 1 Sam. 16. 14. Which things being well known to David, made him put up this Petition; *Cast me not away from thy Presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* And our Church hath wisely directed us to put up the same Petition, that God would not withdraw from us those Gifts of Knowledg, Understanding, Memory, and other Endowments, with which he hath furnish'd us, for the Work and Business to which he hath call'd us.

Lastly, We farther pray in this Petition, that God would not take away the Comforts of his Holy Spirit from us. This Holy Spirit, among other good Offices he doth for us, is stil'd a Comforter, to chear and revive us in all the Troubles that befall us; to which end it suggests to us Arguments of Consolation in every Condition, call'd in Scripture *the Joys of the Holy Ghost*, because they are wrought in us and seal'd to us by the Holy Ghost. *The Spirit of God witnesseth with our Spirit* (saith the Apostle) *that we are the Children of God*; and if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Jesus Christ. This is express'd sometimes by the Light of God's Countenance, which puts more Gladness into the Heart, than the greatest Increase of any earthly things. Now as 'tis a great happiness to feel these Comforts of the Holy Spirit, which fill the Soul with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, and flow at last into that Fulness of Joy and Rivers of Pleasure that are at God's right Hand for evermore; so is it a great misfortune, to be depriv'd of these things: for which reason our Church hath taught us to say with David, Lord, take not the Comforts of thy Holy Spirit from us, lest we sink into Doubtfulness and Despair.

And now we see the Sense of these two Petitions, wherein we desire God to make a clean Heart within us, and not to take his Holy Spirit from us. Since God alone can change and cleanse the Heart, our recourse must be to him for both: and since he works by Means, let us frequent his Word and Sacraments, which he hath appointed for that end. Because his Holy Spirit can alone apply the Efficacy and Benefit of these things, to the renewing a right Spirit in us; let us beseech God not to take away his Holy Spirit from us, but to continue it in its Gifts, Graces, and Comforts unto us: So shall we

purify our Hearts from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and perfect Holiness in the fear of God. Which God grant, &c.



## DISCOURSE XLV.

ROM. XV. 33.

*The God of Peace be with you all. Amen.*

**A**FTER those short and pithy Ejaculations, appointed to attend the *Creed* and the *Lord's Prayer*, of which I have treated at large, there follow three Prayers or Collects, to be us'd at the collecting or gathering together of the People.

The first of these is the Collect for the Day; which being part of the Communion-Service, and set before the Epistles and Gospels, from which they are thought to be collected, shall be consider'd in its proper Place and Time.

The other two for Peace and Grace to live well, being daily us'd at Morning-Prayer throughout the year, must be here spoken to.

Of the First of these, being the Collect for Peace, I shall discourse at this time, from this pious Wish or Salutation of the Apostle, *The God of Peace be with you.*

Which Words containing the Sense and Substance of this Collect, I shall observe in them the following Particulars:

*First*, The Title by which God is invok'd, and that is, *The God of Peace*, which in the Collect is express'd by the *Author of Peace*, and *Lover of Concord*: together with the great Benefits of knowing and serving him as such; for in the knowledge of him, as the God of Peace, standeth our eternal Life, and the Service of him, as such, is perfect Freedom.

*Secondly*, The Request made to him from that Title; and that is in the general, that the *God of Peace* would be with us, to bless us in all our honest Undertakings: more particularly in the Collect, that he would be with

with us, to defend us his humble Servants in all Assaults of our Enemies.

Thirdly, The End and Design of this Petition, which is, that we trusting in his Defence, may not fear the power of any Adversaries. And,

Lastly, The way and means of obtaining it; and that is, Thro the Might of Jesus Christ our Lord. These things comprize the Sum of this Collect for Peace, and must therefore be distinctly handled. And,

First, Of the Title, by which God is here invoc'd, and that is, *The God of Peace*: This is his Name for ever, and this is his Memorial to all Generations. Indeed, in the Old Testament, God deliver'd himself in more Majesty and Terror, and there he is generally stil'd and call'd upon by the name of the Lord of Hosts, and the God of Battel; because he did frequently interpose in those Matters, by giving the Orders, directing the Means, and declaring the Issue of them.

But in the New Testament, which is a more mild and gentle Administration, he is, for the most part, stil'd, *The God of Peace and Love*; the Design of the Gospel being chiefly to promote these things. For God Almighty sent his Son into the World upon that Errand, to make our Peace, and reconcile us to himself by the Blood of his Cross: for which reason he is call'd, *The Prince of Peace*, and the great Peace-maker between God and Man. At his entrance into the World, the first thing he proclaim'd, after *Glory to God on High*, was, *on Earth Peace, and Good-will towards Men*. His Embassy was to reconcile Heaven and Earth, and to settle Amity and Concord in the World; and the last Legacy he bequeath'd to his Followers was Peace, which he would have them cherish and maintain with one another.

Hence our Church enlarges upon this Title, by addressing unto God as *the Author of Peace, and Lover of Concord*.

That he is the Author of Peace, he himself declares: Isa. 57. 14. *I create the Fruit of the Lips, Peace, Peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord. It is he that maketh Men to be of one mind in an house, saith the Psalmist, without which they would be at eternal Enmity and Variance: And therefore he elsewhere tells us,*



*I form the Light, and create Darknes; I make Peace, and create Evil; I the Lord do all these things: Isa. 45. 7.*

And as he is the *Author of Peace*, so is he the *Lover of Concord*; he makes it abroad, and delights in it at home. *Behold! how good and pleasant a thing it is, in the sight of God and good Men, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity; Psal. 133. 1.* As a Father is pleas'd with the Concord and good Agreement of his Children, so is God Almighty delighted with the Peace and Unity of his People; which made our Saviour pronounce the *Peace-makers blessed, for they shall be call'd the Sons of God; Mat. 5. 9.* They imitate and resemble their heavenly Father, who is the God of Peace, and shall receive the Blessings of Peace from him; whereas they that make Breaches and Disturbances, are the Children of the Devil, whom they resemble in his Nature, and imitate in his Works: they are the evil Spirits that dance at Discord; whereas the good Angels are the Heralds of Peace, and rejoice in the Concord and Unity of Mankind. In short, God is the Author of Peace, because he makes and encourages it; and he is the Lover of Concord, because he commends it, and commands all Men to follow it: So that our Church hath wisely prefix'd this Attribute to our Petition for Peace and Concord; he being the Author of the one, and the Lover of the other, which will encourage us to ask, and him to give both. To which here are added two farther Encouragements.

The one taken from the benefit of thus knowing and believing of him; for *in the knowledg of this God of Peace, standeth our eternal Life.*

The other from the Nature and Excellency of his Service, for the *serving him as such is perfect freedom.* For the

1<sup>st</sup>, St. John tells us, that *this is Life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; John 17. 3.* To know the one to be the Author, and the other the Procurer of our Peace, is our great Comfort here on Earth, and will be our great Happiness hereafter in Heaven. As for our selves, tho we first broke the Peace, and thereby justly made God our Enemy; yet we are not of our selves able to make up the Breach, or obtain Reconciliation with him. 'Twas God alone, whom we had offended, could contrive this for us; and this he hath done by the Satisfaction of his Son: for *when we were Enemies* (saith the Apostle)

file) we were reconcil'd unto God by the Death of his Son; and we that were afar off, are brought nigh by the Blood of his Cross: Rom. 5. 10. Col. 1. 20, 21.

Now in this knowledg of God in Christ, consists our eternal Life; for he is our Peace, and there is no Salvation in any other: and therefore we are taught here to urge this as a motive to Peace, that knowing how pleasing it is to God, as well as profitable to our selves, we may be thence induc'd to study Peace and Concord among our selves, and that will surely bring us to everlasting Peace at the last. To this we are farther encourag'd,

2dly, From the Nature and Excellency of his Service, which is so far from Burden and Slavery, that 'tis perfect Freedom: 'tis agreeable to our best Reason, and suited to our best Interest. Here is no violence or compulsion offer'd to us, nor are we dragg'd to it as a Slave to the Gallies, or a Beast to the Altar; but are sweetly drawn by the Cords of Love, and mov'd by a voluntary and ingenuous Freedom. In serving this God of Peace, we serve our selves, and only promote our own Welfare. Indeed the Service of Sin is downright drudgery, and is attended with a great deal of pain and trouble. The Service of Mammon is perfect Slavery; for it makes Men Slaves to the World, and Vassals to all the baits and allurements of it; and the serving our Lusts is a worse Bondage, than that of the *Israelites* under the *Egyptian* Task-masters. Whereas the Service of God is perfectly free from all such Fears and Troubles, and is accompany'd with the purest pleasure and satisfaction of Mind. The God of Peace, whom we serve, can and will deliver his Servants from all Evil, and thereby make his Yoke easy, and his Burden not only light, but delightful. And this will lead me from the Title here given to him and his ways, which are all ways of Pleasantness, and all his paths Peace;

Secondly, To the Petition here presented to him; and that is, that this God of Peace will be with us, not only to bless us in all our ways, but as it is in the Collect, to defend us his humble Servants in all assaults of our Enemies: which Prayer is a plain Confession of our own Weakness and Inability to defend our selves from them. Indeed we are beset with too many Enemies and Dangers, for us to encounter by our own strength. There are Enemies that oppose us from abroad, and there are others that seek to



divide us at home, and both are daily assaulting us on every side; Satan and his Emissaries are still molesting and troubling us. The wicked World is ever plying us with its Temptations, and our own corrupt and deceitful Hearts are too apt to betray us into their hands, and to join issue with our greatest Adversaries: Which Evils and Dangers, since we have no power of our selves either to avoid or to overcome, we fly unto the God of Peace for Succour and Defence against him.

To move him hereunto, we here profess and call our selves *his humble Servants*: not by way of Compliment and Ceremony only, as the manner of too many is; but in Sincerity and Truth, owning our Subjection to him, and as his faithful Servants and Dependents resigning our selves to his Care and Protection, beseeching his Assistance, either to deliver us from, or support us under all Attempts made against us, that they may not be able to do us harm.

But here we may observe, that our Church doth not teach us to pray, that we may not be assaulted at all; for that is not to be hop'd for from an evil and naughty World, but that we may be *defended in all Assaults of our Enemies*. God Almighty never promises to free us from all their Assaults, for it may be expedient sometimes to be exercis'd with them; yea, he hath bid us to expect and prepare for them: *In the World* (saith he) *ye shall have Tribulation, and thro many Tribulations we are to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. But he hath will'd us not to be dismay'd or sink under them, for he hath overcome the World, and hath assur'd us that we shall receive no prejudice from it, as to our eternal Welfare. God permitted his Servant *Job* to fall into the hands of the *Chaldeans* and *Sabeans*, who spoil'd him of all his Substance. *David* declares, that many are the Troubles of the Righteous, but yet God, in his due time, delivers them out of all.

He suffer'd the three Children to be put in a hot fiery Furnace; but he so check'd the power of the Flames, that not a Hair of their Head was burnt or sing'd. He let *Daniel* be cast into a Den of Lions; but he so restrain'd the Rage of those furious Beasts, that they could not do him the least hurt. In like manner, God still permits Enemies to assault us in our Persons, Goods and Name; but he so defends and over-rules matters, as to make all things work together for good to them that love God: So that they find Peace and Quiet within, whatever Troubles and Disturbance they meet



meet with without; and this is what we beg of God, when we say, *Defend us thy humble Servants in all Assaults of our Enemies.* From whence I proceed,

*Thirdly, To the End and Design of this Petition, viz. That we trusting in his Defence, may not fear the power of any Adversaries.* Where we are taught,

1st. *To trust in the Defence of the Almighty.* And,

2ly. *Not to fear the power of any Adversaries.* For the

1st. We have many Precepts and Precedents in Holy Scripture, to put our whole Trust and Affiance in God, and both back'd with many great and weighty Reasons.

For the Precepts to reliance on God, they are too numerous and too well known to need a recital. Holy David, almost in every Psalm, calls upon us to put our Trust in God, and to commit our selves and our ways unto him: Particularly in the 91st Psalm he enlarges upon this Subject throughout the Psalm, and by many Arguments recommends the Duty to us. For himself he tells us, that his Trust should ever be in the Lord, and under the shadow of his Wings should be his Refuge; for he had been a shelter to him in all his Troubles, and a strong Tower of Defence against his Enemies. The Experience he had of his readiness to help him in all his Exigences, made him still to have recourse to him, and to place all his hopes and confidence in him: *Some trust in Chariots (saith he) and some in Horses, but we will trust in the name of the Lord. And they that know thy name (saith he) will put their Trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast never fail'd them that seek thee: Psal. 9. 10.* Such Experiences have been strong Supports and Cordials to good Men in all their Afflictions; for these convince them, that God ordereth all things for the best, and their greatest Wisdom and Safety lies in referring all matters unto him. And indeed if we consider his infinite Power and Goodness, that he is abundantly able, and always ready and willing to succour us, we shall see reason enough to rely upon him at all times, and in all conditions. Neither can any thing provoke him more to leave us, than our distrusting and forsaking him. Diffidence of a Friend in time of Necessity, who hath given sufficient Proof of his readiness to help, is very provoking; and to be suspected after Trial, gives no little Offence. In like manner to distrust God, after so many Instances of his Favour, and when we have often tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, still

to entertain Doubts and Fears of him, must be highly displeasing; for it calls in question either his Power to help us, or his Truth to be as good as his Word: both which are great Reflections, and cannot but highly offend him; and therefore we are directed to banish all Distrust and Doubtfulness of God, and to trust always in his Defence; and that will be a certain way to Safety and Security in the greatest Extremities.

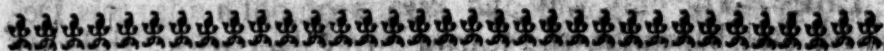
2dly, We are taught here, *not to fear the power of any Adversaries*; that is, not to be dismay'd at the force of our spiritual or temporal Enemies: for when we have plac'd our full Trust and Confidence in God, we shall find little reason to fear the opposition of Men; for greater is he that is for us, than they that are against us. Hence we find the Psalmist declaring, *In God have I put my Trust, I will not fear what Man can do unto me.* Neither the Number, nor the Greatness, nor the Malice of his Enemies could ever daunt him, when God was of his side: *I will not be afraid* (saith he) *for ten thousands of the People, that have set themselves against me round about:* Psal. 3. 6. *Yea, tho an Host of Men should encamp against me, yet shall not my Heart be afraid; and tho there rose up War against me, yet in that will I be confident:* Psal. 27. 3.

Fear betrays the Succours of Reason, destroys our Hopes, weakens our Counsels, and makes all our Endeavours faint and useless: *He that feareth, is not made perfect in love*; his Heart is not right or sound towards God; and therefore the Psalmist declares of the good Man, that he *shall not be afraid of any evil Tidings*; for his Heart is fix'd, trusting in the Lord; his Heart is establish'd, and *shall not shrink, till he see his desire upon his Enemies*; Psal. 112. 7, 8. Our Reliance upon God will engage him to stand by us, and that will be a sufficient ground of Hope and Confidence in him; so that *if we trust in his Defence, we need not fear the power of any Adversaries*: For what is the power of any Adversaries to the power of God, who hath all power both in Heaven and Earth? Why, not so much as a Drop to the Ocean, or a light Dust to the Globe of the whole Earth: yea, they are all nothing, less than nothing, and Vanity. If God be for us, who can be against us? there being no Might, nor Wisdom, nor Counsel against him. And this will shew us,

Lastly, The only way and means of obtaining this Defence, and banishing the fear of any Adversaries; and that is, *thro the might of Jesus Christ our Lord.* By which we acknowledg where our whole Strength and Confidence lies, *viz.* in the Might of our Redeemer, and the Merits of our Saviour. Our own Strength at best is no better than Weakness; we are unable to defend our selves, or resist the least Assault of our Enemies; and should we depend on our own Power, we should fear and be foil'd by every Adversary. All our hopes of Safety and Defence are founded upon the strength of our Saviour, and it would be great folly and presumption to seek for it, or expect it any other way. His Might is alone able to secure us, he hath all power with God, and can obtain for us what he pleases; he can blast all the Designs of our Enemies, which are many times too deeply laid for us to discover or defeat by our own Wisdom and Power. 'Tis the watchful all-seeing Eye of Divine Providence, that can alone discern the Snares that are laid for us; and his out-stretch'd Arm only, that can overpower the force brought against us. Our Safety and Wisdom then will lie in seeking unto God, and referring all our Matters to him; for *the Hand of God is upon them for good, that seek to him; but his Power and his Wrath is against them, that forsake him: Ezra 8. 22.* For which reason our Church here directs us to go to him for Aid and Protection in all Dangers, and to ask it of him in the name, and for the sake of his Son our dear Redeemer; and then we shall neither feel nor fear any real harm from any Adversaries, being guarded by the invincible strength of our mighty Saviour and Deliverer: to which we are taught to say, *Amen,* as a Token of our assenting to, and assuring our selves of the Truth of it.







## DISCOURSE XLVI.

PSAL. V. 3.

*My Voice shalt thou hear in the Morning, O Lord ;  
in the Morning will I direct my Prayer unto thee,  
and will look up.*

**N**EXT to the Collect for Peace, of which I treated in my last, there follows a Collect for Grace, to be us'd every Morning throughout the Year ; of which I shall treat, at this time, from these words : *My Voice shalt thou hear in the Morning, O Lord ; in the Morning will I direct my Prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

They are the words of holy David, who having, in the Verse immediately foregoing, declar'd his purpose of praying unto God, saying, *Unto thee will I pray* ; presently assigns the time of making his Addresses unto him, which is *betimes, or early in the Morning*, as the old Translation hath it ; or as the new Translation reads it, *in the Morning*, without mentioning the Earliness of it. In both of them we may observe,

*First*, An Encouragement to Morning-Prayer, from God Almighty's readiness to hear it ; *My Voice shalt thou hear in the Morning.*

*Secondly*, David's Resolution of observing it, *In the Morning will I direct my Prayer unto thee, and will look up.* I shall speak a word or two of each, and then proceed to the Collect appointed by the Church, to be daily us'd for Morning-Prayer. And,

*First*, Of the Encouragement we have to this part of our daily Devotion, from God's readiness to hear it ; *My Voice shalt thou hear in the Morning.* This the Psalmist speaks of as a thing, of which he had no manner of doubt, but with an air of Assurance, *Thou shalt hear my Voice* ; as if there were a Necessity or Obligation laid upon him so to do. 'Tis not said, thou mayst, or thou wilt, but thou

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shalt

shalt hear my Voice : which Confidence is grounded upon God's Promise, whereby he hath engag'd his Truth and Faithfulness to hear our Prayers. *Call upon me* (saith God) *and I will hear you* ; yea, where there is but a Desire or Inclination to call upon him, he is ready to hearken : *Before you call upon me* (saith he) *I will answer*. And this is no small Encouragement to us to open our Mouths, when he is so willing to open his Ears. 'Tis indeed a bootless and unprofitable Service to speak to a deaf Person, and none care to utter their Complaints to one that shuts his Ears against them. The wisest Charms make no Impression on the deaf Adder, nor can the sweetest Musick affect him that refuses to hear it. But this is not our Case ; for God is more ready to hear, than we are to pray, and is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve. And as he is swift to hear at all times, so he is willing to hear our Voice betimes in the Morning, when we are entering upon the Business of the following day.

*Secondly*, And this made the Psalmist to take up this Resolution, in the next words, *In the Morning will I direct my Prayer unto thee, and will look up*. In the Morning he receiv'd, as it were, a new Life from God, being awak'd out of Sleep, which is the Image of Death, and rais'd from his Bed as from the Grave, or Place of Rest ; and having his Life renew'd every day, he resolv'd to renew his Devotion every Morning. And this he did, by directing his Prayer unto God, and looking up ; for so we find Prayer often express'd in Scripture, by lifting up the Eyes unto Heaven, and looking up to God.

The Jews had a daily Sacrifice commanded them of God, which was, to offer up two Lambs of a year old, day by day continually ; the one in the Morning, and the other in the Evening, *Exod. 29. 38, 39, &c.* which was duly observ'd by them : yea, we find the Heathens, either by the Light of Reason, or by a Tradition from the Jews, did something like it ; for à *Jove Principium* was the Rule of their Actions : they every day began their Enterprizes with Prayers, and ended them with Praises to their Heathen Gods. And this we read was religiously practis'd by David unto the true God ; saying, *In the Evening, Morning, and at Noon will I pray, and that instantly* : *Psal. 55. 17.*

Now in conformity to this antient Practice both of Jews and Gentiles, our Church hath appointed a Morning and Evening.

Evening-Service, to be us'd and perform'd by all its Members.

The Morning-Service is what I am now speaking to, reserving the Evening to its proper Time and Place. And here because we every day receive new Mercies, enter upon new Business, and are expos'd to new Trials and Temptations, the Church hath provided a Morning-Collect or short Prayer suited to all these occasions, which comes next to be consider'd. Accordingly I shall observe in it,

1<sup>st</sup>. The Titles or Attributes of God, with which it begins, serving to usher in the Requests, and quickening our Hopes of attaining them; and they are, *O Lord, our Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God*: where every word may help to beget and encrease our Faith and Confidence in him.

We stile him our *Lord*, to signify his Authority and Dominion over us, that we own our Subjection to him as his Creatures and Servants.

We stile him our *Father*, to signify his Love and tender Care of us, that as a *Father pitieth his Children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him*; and that he not only pities but provides for them; having the Bowels of a Father, he will not suffer his Children to want any thing that is good and convenient for them. And we call him our *Heavenly Father*, to shew the height of his Love and Compassion; that as high as the Heavens are above the Earth, so high are his Thoughts and Compassions above those of any earthly Parents. Moreover,

We stile him *Almighty*, to denote his Power and Ability to help us, having all Might both in Heaven and Earth: that whereas earthly Parents are many times impotent and unable to give good things to their Children, we have a heavenly Father, that is Almighty and All-sufficient, and can do whatever pleases him; so that we need not doubt either his Might or his Mercy, for he is both able and willing to bless and prosper us in all our ways.

Lastly, We stile him *Everlasting God*, to signify the never-failing Duration of his Power and Goodness; that he is a Fountain of Mercy, that can never be drawn dry, for *he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*; and *with him is no variableness nor shadow of turning*. He can help us to day, and to morrow, and for all succeeding times; for he is unchangeable, and his Compassions fail not. These Attributes of God are set in the Preface of this Prayer, to strengthen



strengthen our Faith in him, and to encourage us to go to him every day for his Blessing. After these lofty and encouraging Titles, there follows in this Morning-Prayer,

2ly, An Acknowledgment of God's Providence, in preserving and protecting us from the dangers of the past Night, and bringing us safely to the beginning of a new Day. And this is a very decent piece of Devotion to be minded every Morning; for the dangers of the Night may be, and sometimes are, very great: Night and Darknes give opportunities to ill-minded Men of doing much Mischief: The Thief shelters himself under the Covert of Night, and Enemies surprize Towns and Families when bury'd in Sleep, *invadunt urbem*, &c. So that Night and Darknes suggest many Fears, and expose to great Dangers; and 'tis only the watchful Providence of God, that can guard and secure us from them: 'tis he that *giveth his beloved Sleep*, and keeps them safe both in Body and Soul. *I will lay me down* (saith David) *and take my Rest, for 'tis thou, O Lord, that makest me dwell in Safety.* He that never slumbers or sleeps, is ever awake for our Security, and continually keeps us both sleeping and waking.

These are Mercies that very well deserve our daily Acknowledgments; and we are not worthy to see the Light of another Day, if we are not sensible of the Protection and Deliverance of the past Night: And therefore our Church here willeth us to make fresh Addresses of Thanks every Morning, for the care taken of us the foregoing Night, in delivering us from the Fears and Terrors of Darknes, and restoring us to the Light and Comfort of another Day; in refreshing our weary'd Limbs with Rest, the better to fit them for the business of our Calling, and laying our cares asleep, that our waking thoughts may the better bear the heat and burden of the day. In a word, our Lives being renew'd to us every day, we are daily to renew our Thanks, and to shew forth his Loving-kindness every morning. And having thus bless'd God for bringing us safe to the beginning of a new Day,

We proceed, 3ly, to petition for Defence and Preservation in it; saying, *Defend us in the same by thy mighty Power.* Of our selves we are feeble and helpless Creatures, ready to fall every minute, and, like Children, unable to stand or go upright, without some Support or Assistance. Our Dependence upon God is so entire and absolute, that we cannot be safe night or day without him; and as we  
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are beholden to his watchful Providence to preserve us in the night, so do we need his mighty Power to keep us in the day. Our own Power is but Weakness, and all human Strength is no better; so that to rely upon that, is to lean upon a broken Reed, that will sooner pierce than support us: But the Divine Power is mighty, and is a Safeguard and Defence in all our ways. Without the aid of God's Grace, we can neither go about, or go thro with any thing; nothing that we undertake can prosper, neither can we bring any Work to perfection without his Blessing. We want Direction in all our Affairs, Counsel in all our Doubts, and Support in all our Difficulties, which we can no where have but from the Divine Wisdom and Protection: and therefore our recourse must be unto God, whose Grace will be sufficient for us; and we must, as we are here taught, pray to be defended every day by his mighty Power.

Now Defence evermore supposes some Evils or Enemies, from which we desire to be defended; and because we are daily subject to many spiritual and temporal Evils, we here pray to be defended from both. The spiritual Evils are those of Sin, with all the Temptations and Occasions leading thereunto; against which we pray in these words, *And grant that this day we fall into no Sin.* The temporal Evils are the Disasters, Miseries and Calamities of this Life, which we pray against in these words, *Neither run into any kind of Danger.*

I. I say, we beg every morning to be defended from the spiritual Evils of Sin and Wickedness for the following day; saying, *Grant that this day we fall into no Sin.* Such is the weakness and imbecility of our Nature, that we often fall into Sin thro inadvertence and surprize; and such is the strength and subtlety of our Ghostly Enemies, that they often circumvent us with their Wiles and Temptations. In our Converse with the World, we walk in the midst of Snares, and there is scarce any thing we meet with, but is apt to betray us into Evil. We are tempted when we are alone, and are often assaulted by Satan in our Solitude. We are tempted in Company, in which we are frequently entic'd by bad Counsel, and drawn aside by bad Examples. There are Temptations in Business, on which too many set their whole Hearts, and are thereby led to defraud and go beyond their Brother in many matters. We are tempted in our Pleasures and Recreations,  
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being too often seduc'd into such as are unlawful or unseasonable. There are Balts and Temptations in eating and drinking, the Table sometimes becoming a Snare, that draws many into Excess and Intemperance: In a word, we are every day surrounded with so many Traps and Gins to ensnare us, that without the Divine Care and Protection, we must necessarily fall into them, and nothing but the helping hand of Providence can secure us from them; and therefore we pray every Morning for Defence against them, that we may be guided by an All-seeing Eye to discover, and guarded by an Almighty Power to defeat them; that we may be kept from falling into any Sin, which is displeasing unto God, and disquieting to our own Mind.

But beside these spiritual Evils of Sin and Wickedness, which are so hurtful and pernicious to our Souls, there are other temporal Evils of Sorrow and Sufferings, which are Consequents and Attendants upon them; as the Distempers and Disasters, the Crosses and Calamities of this Life, that have a bad influence upon the Body: And against these we pray in the next words, *Neither run into any kind of Danger.* Our Dangers cease not with the Night, nor do the Troubles and Terrors of it end with Darknes, but many times revive with the Light, and grow greater in the Day: Sin is follow'd with a long train of Evils and Misfortunes; Diseases, Disappointments, Disgrace, and all kinds of Disasters are the usual Effects and Concomitants of it. Now because our own Care and Caution is many times too weak a guard, we beg of God to defend us from these also by his mighty Power: especially such as we draw upon our selves by our own Enormities. There are some publick and unavoidable Calamities, that light upon us out of the common and ordinary Course of Providence; and there are others that we run into by our own Faults and Follies: and being liable to each by the Demerits of our own Crimes, we here desire God to prevent and preserve us from both; that *we fall into no Sin, nor run into any kind of Danger.*

And as we pray every Morning to be defended from all the Evils of the Day, so do we desire also the Divine Aid and Direction for the doing all that is good, in the following words; that *all our Doings may be order'd by his governance, to do always that which is righteous in his sight.* Where we pray,



1. For Assistance in all our Doings, that they may be order'd by God's Governance. And,

2. For Acceptance, that they may be all found *righteous in his sight*.

1. I say, we are directed to pray in the Morning for Assistance in all the Actions of the Day, that all our Doings may be order'd by God's Governance. This is what our Duty and Dependence upon him requires of us, and what our own Interest and Safety may prompt us to; for without him we can do nothing: *In all thy ways acknowledge God (saith Solomon) and he shall direct thy Paths; Prov. 3. 6. The Lord ordereth a good Man's goings (saith the Psalmist) and maketh his ways acceptable to himself;* and therefore wills us, to *commit our ways unto the Lord, and trust in him, and he will bring them to pass: Psal. 37. 5, 23.* If the Lord be pleas'd to order our goings, we shall then certainly go aright; *our ways then will be so direct, as to keep his Statutes:* nay if we fall, we shall not be cast down, for he upholdeth us with his Hand. And to him that thus ordereth his Conversation aright, will he shew the Salvation of God. But if we abandon his governance, and take the ordering of our goings upon our selves, we shall soon lose our way, and wander in the By-Paths of Error and Destruction; and therefore let us (as our Church teaches us) pray every day, that all our doings may be order'd by his governance, and then God will be glorify'd, and we shall be blessed in our Deeds.

Lastly, We pray as for Assistance, so for Acceptance of all our Doings, that *we may do always that which is righteous in his sight*. Our great Business is to approve our selves unto God in all our ways, and to do nothing but what is pleasing in his sight; and if he approve our ways, and acquit us at his Tribunal, it matters not if all the World beside accuse or condemn us.

The Hypocrite indeed seeks only to approve himself to the World, and does his best Works merely to be seen of Men; if he can so frame or disguise his Actions, that they may look fair and plausible in the Eyes of Men, he cares not how foul or evil they appear in the sight of God.

Loose and factious Persons do only what is right in their own Eyes, and stick not to do Evil in the sight of the Lord. They study not to please God but themselves, and look no farther than their own Profit or Pleasure: which

which things can give them no Comfort at present, nor turn to any account at last.

But our Church here teaches us other things, to court not so much the Favour of Men, as the Praise and Glory of God; and to pray, that we may do always that which is righteous in his sight. To which end, we are to watch the Actions of the Day, and to review them at Night, not giving us any Sleep till we have call'd our selves to an account for them, *τις ἔργων, τι δ' ἐπέλα, &c.* what Evil have I done, what Good have I omitted, and wherein have I offended in Thought, Word or Deed? And by thus reckoning with our selves every day, we shall escape the severer reckoning of the last Day.

Thus we see the Scope of this useful and excellent Collect, wherein after an Acknowledgment of the infinite Power and Goodness of God, in preserving us from the Terrors and Dangers of the Night, and renewing our Lives to us every Morning, we implore his Succour and Defence in the ensuing Day, and to be kept from all the Evils thereof; that we fall into no Sin by Temptation or Surprise, nor run into any danger by Inadvertence or Folly; but that all our Actions may be regulated by his guidance, that we may do not what is right in our own eyes, but what is righteous in his sight: And being thus guided by his Grace here, he will e'er long bring us to Glory.



## DISCOURSE XLVII.

EZRA VI. 16. latter part.

*And pray for the Life of the Kings, and of his Sons.*

**A**FTER the two Collects for Peace and Grace in the Morning-Prayer, follows a Prayer for the King or Queen Regent: which is agreeable to the Precepts of Holy Scripture, and the Practice of all Antiquity. In the Old Testament we find many Precepts and Precedents

of praying for Kings, and the People are often call'd upon to say, *God save the King*. In the *Jewish* Liturgy, we find two whole Psalms of *David*, viz. the 21st and 72d, made use of in their Supplication for Kings; yea, we find the very Heathens by a natural Instinct offer'd up Sacrifices and Prayers for their Kings and Emperors. And here in this Chapter of *Ezra*, whereof our Text is a part, we read of a Decree of *Darius* for building the House of God, and restoring the Service of the Temple; for this very purpose, that they might offer Sacrifices of sweet Savour unto the God of Heaven, and pray for the Life of the King, and of his Sons. Which agrees with the Advice of St. Paul in the New Testament, who exhorts that first of all Prayers and Supplications be made for Kings and all that are in Authority, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2, 3.

Now in compliance with all these Precepts and Precedents, our Church, to procure Blessings on the Prince, and to preserve the Loyalty of the People, hath made it a part of our daily Devotion, to intercede with God in the behalf of Kings and Queens; in which Prayers perhaps our Church abounds more than any other Church whatever. We had a short Ejaculation before, *O Lord, save the King or Queen*; which is here repeated in a larger Prayer: in discoursing whereof, I shall observe to you,

*First*, An Acknowledgment of God's Supreme Power and Providence over Prince and People, in the first words; *O Lord our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the only Ruler of Princes; who dost from thy Throne behold all the Dwellers upon Earth.*

*Secondly*, A Supplication for a favourable Eye of Providence upon the present Sovereign, in these words; *Most heartily we beseech thee, with thy Favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lady Queen ANNE.*

*Thirdly*, The Petitions offer'd up in her behalf: which are, (1.) Spiritual; to be replenish'd with the Grace of God's Holy Spirit, to incline her to his Will, and to walk always in his way; as also to be endu'd plentifully with heavenly Gifts. (2.) Temporal; in Health and Wealth long to live, and to be strengthen'd so as to vanquish and overcome all her Enemies. (3.) Eternal; that after this Life she may attain everlasting Joy and Felicity.



city. These are the Parts of this Prayer, of which I shall speak something particularly. And,

*First*, Of the general Acknowledgment of God's sovereign Power and Providence over Prince and People. And this is usher'd in with the Titles of, *O Lord, our Heavenly Father*: wherein we own him to be the Maker and Governour of the World, and all things in it; that he provideth for all his Creatures, as a Father doth for his Children: yea, infinitely better than any earthly Parents can; for they are impotent, and tho ever so willing, are many times unable to give good things to their Children.

But our Heavenly Father is *High and Mighty*, and can do whatever pleaseth him; his Throne is in Heaven, and his Kingdom ruleth over all; he is *higher than the highest*, *Eccles. 5. 8.* higher than all the Kings of the Earth, and frequently call'd by *David, The Most High*. And his Might is as high as his Dignity; and both infinitely above the greatest Princes and Potentates upon earth: He hath no Superiour, but hath all others inferiour and subject to him; for he is

*King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. 'Tis God that sets up Kings as his Deputies and Viceroyes, to reign in his stead and by his authority; *By me Kings reign* (saith he) *and Princes decree Justice*, *Prov. 8. 15.* They receive their Crowns and Scepters from him, and owe all their Power and Authority to him. He is also Lord paramount above all, and all other Lords must pay their Homage and Obedience to him; who is therefore farther stil'd,

*The Ruler, and the only Ruler of Princes*. He is the Ruler of Princes, who are equally his Creatures and Servants with the meanest of their Subjects, and are to pay him the same Submission and Deference; for he hath the Hearts of Kings in his Rule and Governance, and can dispose and turn them, as it seemeth best to his godly Wisdom. And he is the only Ruler of Princes, none else having any Power or Jurisdiction over them; for *Rex in regno est minor solo Deo*. God is the sole Judge and Avenger of the Actions of Princes, who being his Servants and Substitutes, stand or fall to their own Master, and are only accountable at his Tribunal. To think or act otherwise, is to put Kings in the condition of Subjects, and Subjects in the place of Kings; which is in a literal sense to turn the World upside down.

Furthermore, we recognize here God's Omniscience, as well as Omnipotence, in these words; *Who dost from thy Throne behold all the Dwellers upon earth.* As God is far above all the Princes and Potentates of the Earth, so hath he a much larger prospect than they: these are confin'd to Place, and so their Sight is limited only to what is before them, and cannot see afar off; but God is every where, and so his Eyes run to and fro the Earth, and beholds all the Children of Men. His all-seeing Eye reaches to all the parts of the World, and his over-ruling Providence extends to all Creatures in it. So the Psalmist declares, *The Lord looketh down from Heaven, and beholdeth all the Sons of Men; from the place of his Habitation he looketh down upon all the Inhabitants of the Earth:* Psal. 33. 13, 14. His Eyes behold, and his Eye-lids try the Children of Men; the meanest are in his view, and the greatest cannot get out of his sight. Neither is he an idle Spectator only, that merely looks on without any regard; but he observes the Actions of all Men, so as to reward and punish them accordingly. He considers the Wants and Necessities of all his Creatures, from the highest to the lowest, and supplies them out of his own Fulness, that filleth all in all: which is an Encouragement for all Men to address to him in all their Necessities.

From this general Acknowledgment of God's infinite Power and Greatness above all Princes, and his great Care and Goodness to all his People, our Church directs us to pray for the present Sovereign, in the following words; *Most heartily we beseech thee with thy Favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lady Queen ANNE.* The Welfare of the People being bound up in the Safety of the Prince, we are to pray for her for the publick Good. And therefore tho God hath a favourable eye of Providence upon all his Creatures, yet he hath a more particular regard to Kings and Queens, who are the Ministers of his Providence, by whom he conveys Blessings on their Subjects. For which reason, we may and ought to beseech God to have a more especial Care and Inspection over them; and particularly for the Gracious Sovereign whom he hath actually set over us. Hence we find, that People of all Nations and Countries have made it a part of their publick Devotion, to pray for their Kings and Governours. The Apostles and primitive Christians did it for their Emperors, even when they were Heathens and Enemies to Christiani-



ty; how much more then ought we to present our Supplications unto God in the behalf of Christian Kings and Queens, who are nursing Fathers and Mothers to the Church, and Defenders of the Faith profess'd in it?

Accordingly, we are here taught, most heartily to beseech God with his Favour to behold our most Gracious Sovereign Queen; to have always a gracious and watchful eye over her, to look upon the Face of his Anointed, and to make her glad with the Joy of his Countenance. And this we are bid to do, not feignedly, but most heartily; not like those factious turbulent Spirits, who secretly plot against her, when they publicly pray for her; and make Addresses of seeming Honour and Respect, when at the same time they labour to wrest the Scepter out of her hand, and undermine her Throne. These are the bad Efforts of Hypocrisy and Design, which we are from the bottom of our Hearts to beg of God, by a vigilant Eye and Hand of Providence, to prevent or defeat; that the Crown may flourish on her Head, upon which our Protection and Prosperity depend. This is what we do or ought to desire, when we heartily beseech God with his Favour to look upon her. To which end, we are here directed to ask some more particular Mercies and Blessings to be bestow'd and heap'd on her; and they are both spiritual, temporal, and eternal. The spiritual Blessings are the Graces and Gifts of God's Holy Spirit, that they may be replenish'd with the one, and endu'd plenteously with the other; to be preserv'd from the Temptations, and enabled to perform the Duties of her high Station.

1st, I say, we pray here that the Queen may be replenish'd with the Graces of God's Holy Spirit, to incline her always to his Will, and to walk in his Way. The Inclinations of Princes are much observ'd and imitated, and mightily incline others to follow them: *Regis ad exemplum totus componitur Orbis*: The World is guided by the Manners and Inclinations of Princes; their Example hath a great influence upon their Subjects, and most are apt to walk in their ways, whether they be good or bad. Their Piety and Goodness will give great encouragement to Vertue, and their evil Practices will give too much countenance to Vice: which makes it of great consequence, that they should incline to God's Will, and walk in his Way; that they may have Grace to adorn both their Person and their Power, and Goodness to regulate and recommend their



Greatness; that as they move in a higher Sphere, so they may shine with a brighter Lustre, and scatter the more benign and chearing Influences among their Subjects.

Indeed, Princes need a double Portion of the Holy Spirit, to have the Graces of it multiply'd upon them, and to be anointed with this Oil of Gladness above their Fellows: for their Station is higher, and their Fall the greater; their Temptations are more and stronger than other Mens; they have few faithful Friends to advise them aright, and many Flatterers to misguide them for their own ends: they have none upon earth to controul them, and so are more apt to walk in the ways of their own Heart. So that they need more than ordinary Supplies of Divine Grace, to guide and keep them in the right way; which all good Subjects should by their Prayers seek to derive upon them. To which end, God commandeth him *that sitteth upon the Throne of a Kingdom, to have a Copy of his Law written in a Book*, that he may know his Will, and walk in his way; *Deut. 17. 18, 19.* This Book he orders to have always by him, to read and meditate therein day and night, *that he may do according as is written therein; for then his way should be prosperous, and he should have good success; Josh. 1. 8.* Hence (as one hath well observ'd) came the Ceremony of delivering the Bible to Kings at their Coronation, of which we read, *2 Kings 11. 12.* which Custom continues to this day. The Design whereof is, that they may know the Will of God, and be inclin'd to walk in his way; which is what we here desire in their behalf.

And as we pray for the Graces, so do we in the next Petition beseech God to endue them with the Gifts of the Spirit; *Endue them plenteously with heavenly Gifts.* We read in Scripture, that when God anointed any one to be King, he is said to give him 'of his Holy Spirit, to qualify him for that high Station wherein he had set him. Thus when God anointed Saul to be King over Israel, 'tis said that *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, 1 Sam. 10. 9, 10.* that is, he endow'd him with Gifts suited to so high a Calling. The same is affirm'd of David, that when Samuel took the Horn of Oil, and anointed him amidst his Brethren, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him; 1 Sam. 16. 13.* that is, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, by which he could discern between Good and Evil, and do that which was right in the sight of the Lord. The like is said of Solomon, that he ask'd

ask'd of God a wise and understanding Heart, to discern Judgment, and to go in and out before that great People committed to his charge; and God was so pleas'd with him, that he gave him Wisdom above all Men, and multiply'd all other Blessings upon him, *1 Kings 3*. By these Precedents our Church teaches us to pray unto God, to endue her Majesty plenteously with Heavenly Gifts, as a token of those visible effects of his Holy Spirit, which he was wont to bestow on those that were appointed to govern; that he would give her Wisdom to judg between Right and Wrong, and to manage the great Affairs of her Kingdom; that she may hold the Scales of Justice even, and govern her People with Judgment and Equity: which things requiring the Assistance of a Divine Spirit, we are to beg it of God in her behalf. But beside these spiritual Blessings, there are,

*z*ally, Temporal Favours to be interceded for in her behalf: And they are Health, Wealth, long Life, and Victory over Enemies; which are the Sum of all earthly Felicity: and these are ask'd in the following Petition, *Grant her in Health and Wealth long to live.* To live in Health is the greatest of all earthly Blessings; for it gives the relish to all other Blessings, which without it are all sapless and insignificant: yea, Life it self, without Health, is rather a Burden than a Blessing; for *non tam vivere quam valere vita est*, Life consists not so much in Being as Well-being. The Life of the Miserable is a continual Dying, and many have desir'd Death as a Deliverance from the Pains and Miseries of Life. 'Tis Health and Safety, that is the Crown and Comfort of Life, which we are therefore to wish and pray may be granted to our Gracious Queen. To live in Wealth, is to enjoy all that this World can afford; which nothing but Wealth can purchase; and therefore *Job* describes the spending our days in Wealth, by living in all Plenty and Prosperity, *Job 21. 13*. This likewise we are to ask in the behalf of our Queen, that Wealth may be added to her Health, on both which depend the common Safety. We cannot be well long, if matters go ill with her: We share in the Prosperity, and partake of the Adversity of Princes, their Wants and Misfortunes increase ours; if they be troubled, we are soon out of quiet, and *in their peace we have peace*, *Jer. 29. 7*. So that we pray for our own, in praying for their Health and Wealth; which commonly stand or fall together,



Then for long Life, that People of all Ages and Countries have ever address'd for in the behalf of Kings. *Let the King live, God save the King, and O King, live for ever*, were the common Forms of Prayer and Salutation in all Addresses to them. Accordingly we pray here, that God would grant our Queen in Health and Wealth *long to live*.

But there is another temporal Blessing of great importance, which we pray for in the next Petition; and that is, Victory over Enemies, saying, *Strengthen her, that she may vanquish and overcome all her Enemies*. The Enemies of Princes are sometimes open, and sometimes more secret: they are sometimes molested with foreign Enemies, that seek to invade their Territories, and seize their Dominions; and sometimes with domestick Enemies and Rebels, that labour to disturb the Peace of the Country, and both harass and embroil the Kingdom. Against both these, we pray God to preserve and defend our gracious Queen. And because her own Strength is not sufficient to effect this for her, we implore the Assistance of Heaven to strengthen her, to vanquish and overcome them; that He who is the Giver of all Victory, would abate the Pride, assuage the Malice, and confound the Devices of all her Enemies; which our own Interest and Safety may move us to, as well as hers.

Lastly, Because these temporal Blessings will shortly end, we ask for her Mercies that are more lasting, even eternal in the Heavens; to wit, *that finally after this Life, she may attain everlasting Joy and Felicity*. Tho' Princes are stil'd earthly Gods, yet they are all mortal, and must die like Men; Death will cast a black Veil over all their Glory, and lay their Honour in the dust; he that hath vanquish'd other Enemies, will find this last Enemy too hard for him: this King of Terrors will conquer the stoutest Conquerors, 'twill lead captive the greatest Monarchs, and bury all their Triumphs in the Grave. And therefore our Church carries our Petitions farther for them, and follows them into the other World; where we pray they may be receiv'd into the heavenly Mansions, and crown'd with endless and never-fading Glory. When there is nothing farther to be desir'd or enjoy'd by them in this Life, we pray that they may attain everlasting Joy and Felicity in the World to come. And all this thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, by whose Merits alone they can be receiv'd into his everlasting Kingdom.



DISCOURSE XLVIII.

EZRA VI. 10. latter part.

*Pray for the Life of the King, and of his Sons.*

FROM the Prayer for the King or Queen's Majesty, I proceed to that for the Royal Family, which immediately follows it; and of that I shall treat likewise from the foregoing words, *Pray for the Life of the King, and of his Sons.* From which words having, in the preceding Discourse, shew'd what is fit and necessary to be ask'd for the Life and Happiness of the King, I come now to shew what we are to desire for the Life and Welfare of the King's Sons, for whom we are equally commanded to pray; for this we find David did, Psal. 72. 1. *Give the King thy Judgments, O God, and thy Righteousness unto the King's Son.* And our Church here, in a larger Prayer, teaches us to do the same; and both, not only for the Glory of God, which is much advanc'd by pious Princes, but for the Good of the People and Country, which is much further'd by God's Blessing on their virtuous Education. The Hopes of future Generations are founded on the good Principles instil'd into those that shall succeed to the Crown: for then (as the Psalmist declares) *they will judge the People according to right, and defend the Poor. The Mountains then shall bring Peace, and the little Hills Righteousness unto the People; they will help those to their right that suffer wrong, and punish the wrong Doer:* with many other Blessings and Benefits mention'd in that Psalm, that may be expected from their religious Education, which made David take so great care for the Education of his Son Solomon: And the Persian Kings, here in the Text, call'd for the Prayers of the People; not for themselves only, but for their Sons, *Pray for the Life of the King, and of his Sons.* Where, by the King's Sons, we understand the rightful Heirs and Successors to the Crown, which, in Hereditary and Successive Kingdoms, are the next in Blood, whether they be Sons, or Daughters, or any o-

ther

ther Relations. And because we cannot know which of them may live to succeed, we pray for the whole Royal Family, and all the Branches of it, mentioning by name the next Heir Apparent or Presumptive in our publick Devotion, that all People may know and be prepar'd upon the Death or Demise of the Prince Regent, to recognize and receive him. Accordingly our Church, famous for its Loyalty, which 'tis to be hop'd it will take care to continue, hath appointed a solemn Prayer and Invocation of God to this purpose, And in that I shall consider,

*First*, The Attributes of God with which it begins; and they are two, the one taken from his Power, *Almighty God*; the other from his Mercy, *the Fountain of all Goodness*: and both very fit to usher in the following Request.

*Secondly*, The Persons for whom this Prayer is offer'd up, and that is, for the next Heir in being by name, and for all the Royal Family.

*Thirdly*, The Blessings we implore in their behalf, and they are, as before, (1.) Spiritual, *Endue them with thy Holy Spirit, and enrich them with thy heavenly Grace.* (2.) Temporal, *Prosper them with all Happiness.* And, (3.) Eternal, *Bring them to thine everlasting Kingdom.* Which Blessings being much the same with those in the foregoing Prayer for the King or Queen, and as nearly ally'd as the Persons for whom they are ask'd, I shall not need to enlarge or multiply many words to the same purpose. I begin then with,

*First*, The Attributes here given to God, with which the Prayer begins; and they are, *Almighty God, the Fountain of all Goodness.*

The first whereof is taken from the infinite Power of God, imply'd in the word *Almighty*, which signifies one that hath all Might and Power both in Heaven and Earth, and from whom all others derive theirs: for tho Kings and Queens are look'd upon as High and Mighty upon Earth, yet there is one in Heaven that is higher and mightier than they, from whom they receive all the Might and Power they have, and without whom they would be as low and weak as the meanest of all their Subjects: And therefore 'tis fit to own and recognize his Almighty Power, when we crave any Blessings for Prince and People, that both



both they and we may know our entire Dependence upon him. But of this enough before.

The next Attribute is taken from the infinite Mercy of God, who is therefore stil'd here, *The Fountain of all Goodness*. The Expression is taken from *Psal. 36.* and other Places of Scripture, where God is said to be, *The Fountain of Life, and the Well-spring of Salvation*; who *satisfies his People with the Plenteousness of his House, and giveth them to drink of his Pleasures, as out of the River*: Ver. 8, 9.

In the Prophecy of *Jeremiah*, God Almighty stiles himself, *the Fountain of living Waters*, and complains of the Folly of his People in *forsaking of him*, from whom they might still be supply'd with the Waters of Life, and *hewing out to themselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that could hold no Water*; Jer. 2. 13. Indeed God is an inexhaustible Spring of Life, and a Fountain of Goodness, that cannot be drawn dry. He hath all Goodness in himself, and all Goodness is from him: So we find the Church acknowledging, *All our fresh Springs are in thee, and all our pleasant Streams are from thee*. And *David*, to the same purpose, *Thou art good, and thou dost good*; being essentially good in himself, and derivatively so to all his Creatures, upon whom tho he is daily pouring out his Benefits, yet is there no lessening or decay. This Fountain is ever bubbling up and issuing forth, and yet never fails; his Goodness, like himself, having no beginning or end.

*Secondly*, And this is here urg'd as an Argument, to move God to derive his Blessing on the whole Royal Family, that he, whose Goodness is still flowing to all his Creatures, would chiefly water the Royal Stock, to supply all its Branches, that they may all grow and flourish together, and prove a Blessing to us and to future Generations; and God grant that there may be never wanting among them one to sit upon the Throne, and sway the Scepter of these Kingdoms.

From the Attributes of God here us'd to usher in this Prayer for the Royal Family, I proceed,

*Thirdly*, To the Blessings desir'd in their behalf; and they are much the same with those which we before ask'd for the living Prince upon the Throne. As,

1st, *To endue them with his Holy Spirit.*

2ly, *To enrich them with his Heavenly Grace,*

3ly, *To*



3ly, *To prosper them with all Happiness.* And,  
 Lastly, *To bring them to his everlasting Kingdom.*

All which being spoken to in the foregoing Prayer for the present Sovereign, I shall only add a few things on the same Heads, as they relate to the succeeding Princes.

And, 1<sup>st</sup>, we pray, That all the Branches of the Royal Family may be endu'd with God's Holy Spirit; this relates chiefly to the Gifts of the Spirit, with which (as I before observ'd) God was wont to endow those, whom he appointed to rule over others. And as we ask'd these things before for the Prince Regent, to enable him for the faithful discharge of the Office, to which he is actually call'd; so are we to ask the same for the Heirs or young Princes, to prepare and qualify them for that Government to which they may in due time succeed. That they may have Endowments suitable to their high Birth and Quality; and by the benefit of a liberal Education, and a plentiful Effusion of heavenly Gifts, may be fitted for that high Station to which they may be advanc'd. And this we are the more embolden'd to ask, because we read that even inferior Rulers and Partners in Government have had a share of this Holy Spirit, to enable them to sustain their part of the burden of Government allotted to them. So God himself told Moses, Numb. 11. 17. *I will come down and talk with thee, and will take of the Spirit which is upon thee, and put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the People with thee, that thou bear it not thy self alone.* Where God promises to qualify and endow those with his Holy Spirit, whom he calls to any share in the publick Government. Hence we read of Samson, that God blessed him in his Youth, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and mov'd him at sundry times; Judg. 13. 25. This is what we are here directed to ask for all the Relations of the Royal Family, that they may be endu'd with God's Holy Spirit; a Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, a Spirit of Counsel and Might; and be furnish'd with Gifts answerable to the Dignity and Duties of their high Calling.

2ly, We pray, that to the Gifts may be added the Graces of the Spirit, in the next words, *Enrich them with thy Heavenly Grace.* Of all the Blessings of Heaven, there are none more excellent in themselves, or more beneficial to Mankind, than the Graces of God's Holy Spirit; for these are the Perfections of the Divine Majesty, by partaking

*the Prayer for the Royal Family.* 381

taking whereof, we are made in some measure Partakers of his Divine Nature; to be *holy as he is holy, merciful as he is merciful, and perfect as he is perfect*, is to become like unto God, and to advance our Nature as high, as 'tis capable of raising. This is that *excellent way*, to which St. Paul directs, 1 Cor. 12. last, where he wills the *Corinthians*, to covet earnestly the best Gifts; that is, the best both for Ornament and Use: *And yet I shew unto you* (saith he) *a more excellent way*; meaning, the Graces of Faith, Hope and Charity, of which he treats in the following Chapter. And this is what we ask in this Petition for the Royal Family, that God would adorn their Soules with the sanctifying Graces of his Holy Spirit, such as Meekness, Holiness, and the Fear of God; that all the Branches of the Royal Stock may grow in Grace as they do in Years, and have their Minds ennobled with the most divine and excellent Accomplishments, to prompt them to great and generous Undertakings, and to enable them with Honour and Advantage to go thro with them; which cannot be done without Virtue, and the help of Divine Grace. Because the good example of Princes is of great use to the Publick, and the expectations of a Country are founded upon the promising Bravery of their Actions; we pray that their Goodness may equal and adorn their Greatness, and their Graces recommend and run parallel with their worldly Glories. *Vita Principis censura est*. The Life of a Prince is a calling others to account that act otherwise; People oft-times form their Manners by his Example, which carries a mighty Stroke, in the encouraging either of Virtue or Vice. If the Prince be good, the People will in a great measure be so too; for their Rewards and Encouragements will run that way, and that will give credit to Virtue, and bring it into fashion; and likewise put Vice out of countenance, by checking it with Penalties and Disgrace; which things must make a Kingdom or Country happy. But if Princes be bad, Matters will go quite otherwise; for then Virtue will be frown'd upon and neglected, and Vice will grow bold and headstrong: and this cannot but make a Nation vile and miserable, for *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People*. And therefore we are highly concern'd to pray for all the Branches of the Royal Family, who are the Hopes or Fears of the next Generation; that they may be educated in Virtue, and become both the Patterns and



Patrons of true Piety. And then all Generations may justly call them and their People blessed.

These are the two great spiritual Blessings we are here directed to pray for in their behalf, to wit, that they may be *endu'd with the Gifts, and enrich'd with the Graces of the Spirit*; that they may *abound in Knowledge, and be rich in Good Works*.

The next Petition concerns temporal Blessings, which we desire may be likewise heap'd and multiply'd upon them, in these words, *Prosper them with all Happiness*. And this relates to all the parts of worldly Prosperity: As,

(1.) To prosper them in their Bodies with Health and Strength, that they may be vigorous and active in the business of their Station, and not hinder'd from it by any Sickness or Weakness.

(2.) To prosper them in their Souls with Wisdom and Courage, to understand and undergo the Burden of their weighty Affairs.

(3.) To prosper them in their Substance with Wealth and Riches, to support their Safety, defend their Dignity, and protect their People.

(4.) To prosper them in their Name, with Honour and Renown; which will add much to their Power, and strengthen the Beams of Majesty.

Lastly, To prosper them in their Forces and Armies with Fortitude and Might, to overawe or overcome all their Enemies; and in a word, to give them Victory and Success in all their laudable Undertakings.

These are the principal parts of earthly Felicity, contain'd in this Petition, *Prosper them with all Happiness*. But there is another and greater Blessing here ask'd for the Royal Family; and that is, eternal Felicity hereafter in Heaven, in these words, *And bring them to thine everlasting Kingdom*. The Kingdoms of this World, which they are in prospect or possession of, are both transitory and troublesome, of short continuance, and liable to the Changes and Vicissitudes of Fortune. All earthly Crowns are fading like the Flowers of the Field; at best, they are encumber'd with Cares, and may be reckon'd like that of our Saviour's, rather *Crowns of Thorns* than *Crowns of Glory*. But there is a *Kingdom in Heaven* that is everlasting, seated above all the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life; and like Him that sitteth on it, *without variableness or shadow of turning*. The Apostle styles it a *Kingdom that cannot be*



*moved, Heb. 12. 28. and elsewhere, an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us; 1 Pet. 1. 4. There is a Crown that will sit firm for ever on the Heads of them that wear it, call'd therefore an exceeding, excessive, and eternal Weight of Glory; 2 Cor. 4. 17.*

This is what we here chiefly pray for in the behalf of the King's Sons and Heirs, that when they have enjoy'd all the Happiness and Prosperity that an earthly Kingdom can afford, they may be receiv'd into an everlasting Kingdom in Heaven, there to live and reign in Glory for evermore: All which things are here ask'd, *through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whose Merits and Mediation alone they can be obtain'd.*

Thus having explain'd all the Parts of this Prayer for the Royal Family, it remains that we seriously consider, and heartily desire these things, when we offer it up.

To which end, let us remember, first, that God is *the Fountain of all Goodness*, from whence all the Streams of Bounty flow: He is *the Father of Lights*, from whom alone cometh every good and perfect Gift. And more particularly, he is the Sovereign Monarch of Heaven and Earth, who disposeth of all the Kingdoms of the World, and to whom all Kings owe their Crowns and Scepters; and therefore we fitly address to him, to derive down Blessings upon the Heads of Princes, not only those that are actually upon the Throne, but those that are to succeed to it; that they may be plenteously endow'd with all spiritual Gifts, and richly adorn'd with all heavenly Graces; that they may discharge their present Post with Honour, and be fitted for a higher whensoever they shall be call'd to it: in a word, that they may freely enjoy all the Comforts of an earthly temporal Kingdom, and be at last translated to a never-fading Kingdom of Glory in Heaven. Indeed,

Common Charity, which wisheth the Welfare of all Men, teaches us to pray for Kings, and all that are related to them, or put in Authority under them; this being the only way we have of shewing our Good-will, or exercising our Charity towards them. But Charity to the Publick requires this much more; for the Prince's Welfare is the common Good: we all partake of the Blessings or Misfortunes that betide them, and therefore are concern'd to pray, that they may be crown'd with the one, and be  
kept

kept from the other. Yea, Charity to our selves may prompt us to pray for Kings and Princes; for 'tis by them that we enjoy great Quietness, and 'tis by their Prosperity and Protection, that we lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty. But above all, our Duty to God, whose Ministers they are, exacts this from us; for hereby we shew our Respects to him, who hath told us that this is good and acceptable in his sight.



## DISCOURSE XLIX.

PHILIP. I. 1, 2.

*Paul and Timotheus the Servants of Jesus Christ, to all the Saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons; Grace be unto you, and Peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**A**FTER the Prayers for the King and Queen's Majesty, and the whole Royal Family, who under God are the supreme Governours of the State; there follows a Prayer for Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, who under Christ are the spiritual Guides and Governours of his Church; together with the whole Flock of Christ committed to their Charge, for whom we are likewise in Scripture commanded to pray, as may be seen in Eph. 6. 18, 19. Col. 4. 3. 1 Thess. 5. 25.

From these Precepts of Holy Scripture, and the Precedents of Antiquity grounded thereupon, our Church hath prescrib'd an excellent Form of Prayer to be daily used for that purpose; by which, together with the former, we pray for the Prosperity and Preservation of Church and State, as becomes those that are true and faithful Members of both.

And having explain'd the Prayers put up for our temporal Governours, I come now to that which concerns our spiritual Guides; of which I shall speak from this Salutation of *Paul and Timothy*, wherein they wish for the Multiplication

kept from the other. Yea, Charity to our selves may prompt us to pray for Kings and Princes; for 'tis by them that we enjoy great *Quietness*, and 'tis by their Prosperity and Protection, that we lead *quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty*. But above all, our Duty to God, whose Ministers they are, exacts this from us; for hereby we shew our Respects to him, who hath told us that this is good and acceptable in his sight.



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PHILIP. I. 1, 2.

*Paul and Timotheus the Servants of Jesus Christ, to all the Saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons; Grace be unto you, and Peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**A**FTER the Prayers for the King and Queen's Majesty, and the whole Royal Family, who under God are the supreme Governours of the State; there follows a Prayer for Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, who under Christ are the spiritual Guides and Governours of his Church; together with the whole Flock of Christ committed to their Charge, for whom we are likewise in Scripture commanded to pray, as may be seen in *Eph. 6. 18, 19. Col. 4. 3. 1. Thess. 5. 25.*

From these Precepts of Holy Scripture, and the Precedents of Antiquity grounded thereupon, our Church hath prescrib'd an excellent Form of Prayer to be daily used for that purpose; by which, together with the former, we pray for the Prosperity and Preservation of Church and State, as becomes those that are true and faithful Members of both.

And having explain'd the Prayers put up for our temporal Governours, I come now to that which concerns our spiritual Guides; of which I shall speak from this Salutation of *Paul and Timorhy*, wherein they wish for the Multi-  
plication



plication of Grace and Peace upon the Bishops and Deacons that were at *Philippi*. Accordingly, our Church here teaches us to pray for the Continuance and Increase of both, upon all their Successors in those Offices. Now this Prayer for the Church and Clergy begins,

*First*, With the Titles of *Almighty and Everlasting God*; which being the general Preface and Introduction to most of our Prayers, hath been before sufficiently explain'd. To this is added here another Attribute or Perfection of God Almighty, taken from his wonderful Works, in these words, *Who alone worketh great Marvels*: to signify, that God hath always appear'd in the defence and vindication of his Church; and when ordinary Means have fail'd, he hath ever done great and marvellous things for its preservation. Hence he is describ'd to be a *God glorious in Holiness, fearful in Praises, doing Wonders*; *Exod. 15. 11.* *Eliphaz* tells *Job*, to comfort him in his Afflictions, that *God doth great things and unsearchable, yea, and marvellous things without number*; *Job 5. 9.* *David* used this as a Motive to Trust and Affiance in God, saying, *We have heard with our Ears, and our Fathers have told us the great things he did in their days, and in the old times before them*; *Psalm. 44. 1.* Where he makes the Commemoration of former Mercies and Deliverances a ground of Confidence, that he is still able and willing to defend and protect his Church. He hath done many strange and wonderful things in all Ages to this purpose, and we can have no reason to doubt his doing the same in our days, as occasion shall require: He is still an Almighty and Everlasting God, and can preserve his Church as well as ever. As he hath supported it hitherto under the Rage of Persecutors and the Malice of all its Enemies, so will he still preserve it from the Subtlety of Hereticks and Schismatics, and from all the Attempts of factious Underminers; having founded it on a Rock, and promis'd that *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*. His Hand is not shorten'd that it cannot save, nor his Bowels straiten'd that he cannot pity; but his Power and Providence, his Faithfulness and Goodness are still the same, and he will not suffer his Truth or his Church to fail. This is the God to whom we address here in the Church's behalf, namely, *He who alone worketh great marvels*.

From the Preface to this Prayer, let us proceed,

*Secondly, To the Persons for whom it is made; and they are, The Bishops and Curates, and all Congregations committed to their charge. In the Text 'tis, Bishops and Deacons, with all the Saints in Christ Jesus.* By Bishops in both places are meant the prime Rulers and Governours of the Church, who preside in it, and direct the Affairs of it. Such were the Apostles in the beginning of Christianity, who first planted and propagated the Christian Church, and ordain'd Elders in every City, setting in order the things that were wanting, Tit. 1. 5. And such are the Bishops, who still succeed them in that Office; having the highest Dignity, and consequently the greatest Charge in the Church: for they have the Oversight of Pastors and People, and are to take care of the Edification and good Government of both. They are to ordain fit Persons for the Work of the Ministry, and to invest them into the Authority and Places of exercising their Function: They are to confirm the Catechumens, and to provide for their farther and fuller Instruction. In short, they are to preserve sound Doctrine, to prevent Heresies and Schisms, to guard the Externals of Religion, and to see that all things in the Church be done decently and in order.

These are great and weighty Employments, which by reason of the difficulty of discharging them, call for the Benefit and Assistance of our Prayers. And that not for the Bishops only, but

(2.) For all his Curates: by which we are to understand not only such as are hired to officiate in the place or room of another, as the Name is commonly taken; but all the inferiour Orders of the Ministry, as Presbyters and Deacons, to whom the Bishop is wont to commit the Cure of Souls: all which are therefore call'd his Curates, being subordinate to their Bishops, as the seventy Disciples were to the Apostles.

The truth is, antiently the sole Charge of all the Churches within such a District or Diocess lay upon the Bishop; who to ease and assist him therein, appointed some *Curatores* or Deputies, to take off part of the Burden of his Cares; and these were call'd the Bishops Curates: and in this sense all Parsons, Rectors, or Vicars come under that Appellation, and are so stil'd here and in other places of our Liturgy.



The Office and Business of these, is to baptize and preach the Gospel to all Nations, to catechize the Children, and to instruct grown Persons, to comfort the Feeble-hearted, support the Weak, visit the Sick, administer the Holy Sacraments, bless the Living, and bury the Dead: all which being Duties of more than ordinary use and importance, require Diligence, and the Assistance of our frequent and fervent Prayers.

And this is to be done, (3.) for all Congregations committed to their charge; by which we are to understand all Christian People, who are requir'd to attend the publick Assemblies for the hearing of God's Word, and receiving the Holy Sacraments. This is the Flock of Christ committed to their charge, consisting of Pastors and People join'd together in the Bonds of Faith and Love. And all these Congregations, together with the Bishops and Curates to whose charge they are committed, make up the whole Church. So Christ himself describes it, by a Shepherd and his Sheep hearing his Voice: And St. Cyprian, to the same purpose, *Ecclesia est Plebs Sacerdoti adunata, & Pastori suo Grex adherens*; The Church is a Congregation of Believers united to their Bishop, and a Flock adhering to their Shepherd; *Epist. 69.* So that this is a Prayer for the whole Church, and all the Parts and Members of it; but chiefly for the Pastors and Teachers of it, describ'd here by Bishops and Curates. These are the Persons here directed to be pray'd for. But

What are the Petitions to be offer'd up for them? Why, that the next words will shew to be these two:

1st, That God would send down upon them the healthful Spirit of his Grace.

2dly, That in order to please him, he would pour upon them the continual Dew of his Blessing. Of which briefly.

And, 1st, We pray here that God would send down upon all Bishops and Curates, and all Congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of his Grace. In which Expression there seems to be an Allusion to God's sending down the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, whereby they were said to be endu'd with Power from on high; meaning, that they were endow'd with those heavenly Powers, and receiv'd such Measures of Divine Grace, as were sufficient to qualify them for the Work of the Gospel, to which they were call'd. Of this



kind were the *Gift of Tongues*, whereby they could of a sudden speak all manner of Languages; the *Gift of Revelation*, whereby they could discover and reveal to others the whole Mind and Will of God, and *lead them into all Truth*; and the *Gift of Miracles*, whereby *many Wonders and Signs were done by the Apostles*, for the Confirmation of the Gospel, and the propagating the Truths deliver'd by them. These were the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost granted to the Apostles, in the beginning of Christianity, for the growth and increase of it. And tho they are now ceas'd with the reason of them, yet there are other ordinary Gifts of the Spirit, which still continue and will to the World's end. And these we here pray God to send down upon the Pastors and Teachers of his Church, to fit them for the work and business of their Office. And this is that *healthful Spirit of God's Grace*, which we desire may be given to all Bishops and Curates, and all Congregations committed to their charge; to wit, the salutary Gifts and Graces of God's Holy Spirit, to enable them to discharge the several Duties of their respective Ranks and Stations: which things are as necessary to the Health and Welfare of the Soul, as Food and Physick are to the Health and Vigour of the Body.

Indeed, both Priest and People, with all the Orders and Ranks of them, stand in an absolute and indispensable need of the Assistance of this Divine Spirit, without whose Aid we can do nothing; as will appear upon a short view of them.

And, (1.) The Bishops and chief Pastors of the Church stand in need of the healthful Spirit of God's Grace; for the Weight and Burden of their Office is very great: upon them, as upon the Apostles of old, lies *the Care of all the Churches, which comes daily upon them*; 2 Cor. 11. 28. They are to admonish, to correct, and to rebuke with all Authority. They have the Inspection of the Lives and Manners of those under their charge, and must exercise the Censures of the Church, as occasion shall require. Which things require Wisdom, Fidelity, Courage, and other Graces of the Holy Spirit; which we are to pray may be multiply'd upon them.

(2.) All the inferiour Clergy that minister about Holy Things, stand in need of this healthful Spirit of God's Grace. These are here call'd the Bishop's Curates, because they take off part of his Care, and share in the Burden of

of his Office. They are intrusted with the Service of the Altar, and the Souls of the People; being appointed to instruct the Ignorant, to encourage the Good, and exhort the Bad, to convince Gainsayers, and to turn all Sinners from the Evil and Error of their ways. And *who* (saith the Apostle) *is sufficient for these things?* Why, none are sufficient of themselves, *but our Sufficiency is of God*, and his Grace alone is sufficient for us; which we are therefore to ask for all them that *labour in the Word and Doctrine.*

(3.) All the Congregations committed to their charge, stand in need likewise of this healthful Spirit of God's Grace; for they are to hear and receive the Instructions of their spiritual Guides, to be willing to learn and practise what they hear from them, to bear their Reproofs, and to amend upon their Admonitions; which things require such meek, tractable, and gracious Dispositions, as nothing but the Spirit of God can work in them: for *Faith, Goodness, Gentleness, Patience*, and the like, without which the Word preach'd can profit nothing, are by the Apostle reckon'd among the Fruits of the Spirit, *Gal. 5. 22.* And therefore that the Word of God may have its due effect upon Minister and People, we are to beg of him to send down the healthful Spirit of his Grace upon both; the first and chief thing here pray'd for, both for Clergy and People.

The 2d is, that in order to their pleasing of God, he would *pour down upon them the Dew of his heavenly Blessing*: where two things are plainly intended and insinuated to us.

1. That in all our ways we should endeavour to please God.

2. That this cannot be done without the Dew of his heavenly Blessing.

1. I say, 'tis here intimated to us, that we are to endeavour in all our ways to please God: To this we have many Exhortations in Holy Scripture, in which we are call'd upon to *walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the Knowledge of God*; *Col. 1. 10.* meaning, that all our Works should be so done, as to be acceptable unto him. And the same Apostle tells the *Thessalonians*, that he had set them a Rule to *walk so as to please God*, *1 Thess. 4. 1.* And this we are oblig'd to do, as he is our Master, and we his Servants.

A Servant, you know, honours his Master, and studies to please him; and God challenges the same from his Servants, saying, *If I am a Master, where is my Honour, saith the Lord of Hosts*, Mal. 1. 6. St. Paul exhorts all Servants to be obedient to their Masters, and to please them well in all things, Tit. 2. 9. And if we are thus bound to please our earthly Masters, how much more ought we to please our Master in Heaven?

Beside, God is our Maker as well as Master, he is our Father, and we his Children; and that must be an ungracious Child, who is not willing to please his Father. Moreover, as 'tis our Duty, so 'tis our Wisdom and Interest to please God; for we cannot better profit our selves, than by pleasing him. The Benefits and Privileges which will accrue to us hereby, are many and great; for by pleasing of God he will be at peace and well pleas'd with us, which is the greatest Comfort we can have in this world, and will be the greatest Blessedness of the next. Yea, he will not only be at peace with us himself, but will make others, even our greatest Enemies, to be at peace with us. So Solomon tells us, *when a Man's ways please the Lord, he will make his very Enemies to be at peace with him*, Prov. 16. 7. which is enough to put us upon the Study of pleasing him.

But how may we be enabled to please God? Why, not by the Worth or Merit of our own Works, for when we have done our best, we are but unprofitable Servants; but by the sole Power and Virtue of God's Blessing, express'd here by the *Dew of his heavenly Blessing*. Dew is in Scripture set to signify Plenty and Abundance, especially of Grace and Knowledg: the *Dew of Hermon that fell upon the Hill of Zion*, is said to be follow'd with the *Blessing of God and Life for evermore*, Psal. 133. 3. And 'tis usual to express the Plenty of Divine Blessings by the Dew of Heaven. So the Prophet Zechary describes the Promises of Prosperity to Jerusalem, viz. *Their Seed shall be prosperous, the Vine shall give her Fruit, the Ground shall give her Increase, and the Heavens shall give their Dew*; Zech. 8. 12. meaning, they should be enrich'd with all manner of Plenty. Hence the Plenty of Grace and Knowledg is here signify'd by the Dew of God's heavenly Blessing; which we are taught to pray for in the behalf of the Clergy, not only to qualify them for their Office, but to make their Labours pleasing to God, and prosperous to his People. To which end, we desire him not barely to sprinkle them with a few



few Drops of this Divine Dew, but to pour it out in large and liberal Effusions upon them; and that too, not only now and then, or at some certain seasons, but to pour upon them the continual Dew of his Blessing, that they may be daily water'd from above, to make them fruitful in every good Word and Work. 'Tis the Blessing of God that maketh rich in Grace and Knowledg, as well as in Substance; and the Fruits of the Spirit spring up and thrive only by his heavenly Benediction: Tho Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, yet 'tis God only that gives the Increase; 1 Cor. 3. 5, 6, 7, 8. Tho Ministers may plant and preach the Gospel, and water their Disciples too in the Laver of Baptism, yet the whole Success of both is intirely from God, who alone can give and bless the Increase. For as the Plants cannot grow without the quickening and moistening Influence of the Dew, so neither can we grow in Grace or Knowledg without the Dew of God's heavenly Blessing: which we are therefore to ask with fervent and uncessant Prayers for Pastors and People. If any lack Wisdom (saith St. James) let him ask it of God, who giveth to all Men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given unto him; Jam. 1. 5. God is ever ready and willing to bestow his Blessing upon them that crave it, provided they ask it aright, which must be in Faith without wavering; and likewise, as the close of this Prayer directs, we must beg him to grant it for the Honour of our Advocate and Mediator Jesus Christ. Not for our own Honour, to set forth our selves, or to make a vain-glorious Show and Ostentation of our own Parts, but to advance the Glory of God, which will be the best way to advance our own; for then great will be our Reward in Heaven; which God grant, &c.



## DISCOURSE L.

MAT. XVIII. 19, 20.

*Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on Earth, as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,*

**H**AVING explain'd the Prayers for the Prince, Priest, and People, which take in all Ranks and Degrees of Men within the compass of our Devotion and Charity; I come now to the

Last concluding Prayer of our Morning-Service: which hath respect to all the former Petitions, and teacheth us to exercise our Faith and Hope in God for the Return and Accomplishment of them, as will be more fully seen hereafter.

The Prayer is ascrib'd to St. Chrysostom, who is said to be the Author or Composer of it; being found in his and most of the *Greek* Liturgies, from whence it was taken and inserted into ours.

Of this Prayer I shall discourse to you from this Saying of our Saviour, *If two of you agree, &c.* Which words contain,

1st, A Condition or Qualification of an acceptable Prayer; and that is, the Concord or Agreement of the Petitioners: *If two of you shall agree touching what ye shall ask.*

2dly, The Success of such unanimous Prayers; *What ye thus ask, shall be done for you of my Father which is in Heaven.*

3dly, A Reason to assure us thereof, taken from the Promise of the Divine Presence; *For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.*

These

*upon the Prayer of St. Chrysostom.* 393

These things are included in the Text, and farther enlarg'd upon in this Prayer of St. Chrysostom; in which we have,

*First*, A thankful Acknowledgment of God's Goodness, in giving us Grace with one accord to make our common Supplications unto him.

*Secondly*, A gracious Promise, That when two or three are gather'd together in Christ's Name, he will grant their Requests.

*Thirdly*, A hearty Petition for the performing of this Promise; Fulfil now, O Lord, the Desires and Petitions of thy Servants, as may be most expedient for them.

*Fourthly*, The principal Requests we are to make to him; and they are, To grant us in this World the Knowledge of his Truth, and in the World to come Life everlasting.

These are the Particulars both of the Text and Prayer, and so must be distinctly handled.

I begin, as the Prayer doth, with the thankful Acknowledgment of God Almighty's Goodness, in giving us Grace with one accord to make our common Supplications unto him. Where we are taught to acknowledg and thank God for two things:

(1.) That he hath given us Grace to pray at all. And,  
(2.) That he hath given us Grace to pray together, and with one accord to make our joint and common Supplications unto him. For the

(1.) 'Tis a Mercy, that God hath given us Hearts and Grace to pray at all; for many have their Hearts so harden'd thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin, and are so deluded with the Deceitfulness of Riches, as to be averse to all holy Duties, and more especially to this of Prayer. The Psalmist speaks of some that fell into an utter Forgetfulness of God, and seldom or never call'd upon his Name: and 'tis the practice of too many in our days, to use the Name of God oftener in their Oaths and Imprecations, than in their Prayers. St. Paul's Conversion is describ'd by his praying, Behold! he prayeth, Acts 9. 11. He who before persecuted the Church of Christ, now prayeth and preacheth in his Name; and his former Averseness to these Duties, is turn'd into the greatest Fervency and Frequency in both. From this Example, and the many other Precepts to this Duty, our Church teaches us to bless God, for giving us an hearty



heartily Desire to pray; as we may see in the Collect for the third Sunday after Trinity.

But the Mercy here chiefly acknowledg'd, is God's giving us Grace to pray together with one accord, and making our common Supplications unto him. This our Saviour makes the Condition and Qualification of an acceptable Prayer. If we agree together in what we ask, and join in putting up the same Supplications unto our heavenly Father, then do we with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: which is of all other the most pleasing and acceptable Sacrifice to him. 'Tis the Delight of a Father to behold the joint Affections and Addresses of his Children, which will encourage him to answer and gratify all their reasonable Requests: but to see them clash and differ among themselves, is grating and unpleasing, and will draw upon them a Curse instead of a Blessing. To join in the same Prayers and Praises, discovers not only our Love and Duty unto God, but our mutual Kindness and Charity to one another; and to go together to the House of God as Friends, is the best way to preserve a loving and amicable Correspondence among Christians. Experience shews, that different Opinions and Communion beget difference in Affection; and they that cannot agree in the Worship of God, seldom agree in any thing else. The truth is, Love hath an uniting Quality, and keeps Men together; but 'tis Hatred and Enmity only that disjoins and separates them: and such as divide in spiritual matters, make Breaches and Divisions in all others. This made our Saviour pray, that his Followers may be all of one Heart and one Mind; and the Apostle would have them all to speak the same thing, and to be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind and the same Judgment; 1 Cor. i. 10. The primitive Christians were so, and 'tis only the Subtlety of Seducers and false Teachers that has made it otherwise; whom we are therefore bid to mark and to avoid, Rom. 16. 17. And because many are unhappily drawn aside by these Divisions, we here thank God for giving us Grace to escape them, and to be of the number of those, who with one accord make their common Supplications unto him: Which we are encourag'd to do,

Secondly, By the Benefit and Success of such united Petitions; for God hath promis'd, that where two or three agree together in what they ask, he will grant their Requests;

quests; or as 'tis in the Text, where these are gather'd together in his Name, there will he be in the midst of them. Where God is, there can be nothing wanting, for in his Presence is Fulness of Joy. God is indeed every where by his general Presence, and from his Holy Place hears the Cries of all his Creatures; but he is more especially present in the Church or House of God, the Place call'd by his Name, where he hath promis'd to meet and to bless his People, to receive their Prayers, and grant their Requests. But 'tis the Agreement in our Prayers, that procures them acceptance; for if we clash, and put up contrary Petitions, he neither can or will hear us. 'Tis the Concord and Unanimity of our Devotion that most takes and prevails with him; and he regards more the Unity, than the Multitude of our Prayers. *If but two or three agree on earth to ask any thing, it shall be given by our Father in Heaven:* but a multitude of Prayers without Concord are of no avail. Dissension mars the Efficacy of Devotion; and the Audience and Acceptance of our Prayers with God, depend upon our unanimous Addressses and Applications to him: for 'tis *when two or three are gather'd together in Christ's name, and agree in what they ask, that God will be in the midst of them.* Which shews us the Usefulness and Necessity of publick Forms of Prayer, without which we cannot agree in what we ask, or put up the same Petitions.

I know the Dissenters urge those words of our Saviour, to countenance their Conventicles and Dissensions; that tho they leave the Church, and join not in the publick Worship in his House of Prayer, yet if they creep into private Houses or unconsecrated Places, and there two or three are gather'd together, to offer up different Petitions, they may upon Christ's words depend upon God's Presence and Blessing.

But these Men either ignorantly mistake, or wilfully pervert the Sense of our Saviour's words; which are meant of meeting together in God's House, which he hath call'd the House of Prayer for all People, and there with one accord putting up the same Prayers and Petitions; not of breaking into Parties and Factions, and separating into different Places and Ways of Worship, which are Breaches of the Peace, Order, and Unity of his Church. Such Meetings are the Schisms and Divisions so sharply rebuk'd by the Apostles, as Signs of Carnality, and Symptoms of Apostacy; and so may be reckon'd rather riotous than regular Assem-



Assemblies. They that follow them forsake Christ's Fold, and err and stray from his ways like lost Sheep; whereas Christ's Flock *hear the Voice of the Shepherd, and follow him: Strangers and Seducers they will not follow, but flee from them; for they know not the Voice of Strangers: John 10. 4, 5.*

So that by gathering together in Christ's Name, is meant either the meeting together in the Places call'd by his name, or the offering up our unanimous Petitions in his name, or for his sake; or else the gathering together in obedience to his Command, and in hopes of Acceptance thro his Merits and Mediation: They that do so, have a Promise of his Blessing, that he will vouchsafe his Presence and Favour to them, and make them joyfull in his House of Prayer. Moreover,

The mention of two or three gathering together, was not to diminish the Flock of Christ, which he indeed stiles a little Flock, and tells us that few there be that find and walk in the paths of Life; much less to discourage us from following of him, from the Fewness of them that do so; but rather to invite each of us to make one of them, and to increase their number: for if the united Prayers of two or three meeting in God's House will be surely heard, how much more prevalent will be the unanimous Voice of a numerous Assembly? Which should teach us not to follow the example of those, who *forsake the assembling themselves, as the manner of some is; nor to be of the number of such as draw back unto Perdition, but of those that believe, and draw nigh to the saving of their Souls.*

In short, to be gather'd together in Christ's name, is to meet together in God's House of Prayer, according to his Order and Appointment, and there making our common Supplications unto him: and in so doing, he will assist our Prayers, and accept and reward our united Devotion; *he will be in the midst of us*, which is render'd here by *granting our Requests*: and that is indeed the best Testimony of his being among us, when he hears our Prayers, and grants us our Hearts desire. From whence,

Thirdly, Our Church directs us to put up daily a Petition for the actual Performance of this Promise, in the following words; *Fulfil now, O Lord, the Desires and Petitions of thy Servants, as may be most expedient for them.*

Now,



Now, that we have offer'd up our Supplications, and made known our Requests unto him, we beseech him to make good his Word, by giving us the Comfort of his Presence; and to fulfil his Promise, by hearing and answering our Prayers. Where we are taught to apply his Promise to the present Occasion; and imagining Christ to be actually present with us, we mind him of his Word, and urge it upon him to make it good; *Fulfil now, O Lord, the Desires, &c.* To fill, you know, supposes a former Emptiness or Defect, and that something is wanting to fill it up. To fulfil, is to compleat a thing, and bring it to its full perfection. The Expression implies a Sense of our Inability to supply our own Wants, and a seeking to another to accomplish that for us, which we cannot for our selves; especially to one who hath pass'd his Word for it, and engag'd so to do. And this is the *fulfilling* we here beg of God, viz. that he will remember his holy Promise, and accomplish what he hath spoken concerning his presence with and blessing of us. The bare Promise leaves us still empty and unsatisfy'd, and nothing but its Performance can fill or furnish us: and therefore we desire God, not only to fulfil his Word, but to fill up our Wants out of his own Fulness, who filleth all in all. He hath bid us to *open our mouths wide*, and he will fill our most enlarged Desires; for *he openeth his Hand, and filleth all things living with Plenteousness.* *Fulfil now, O Lord, the Desires and Petitions of thy Servants:* Desires and Petitions (as one hath observ'd on these words) are in themselves empty things; they are the Hunger and Thirst of the Soul: and when the divine Bounty is pleas'd to satisfy these Cravings of Nature and Grace, he is then said to fill us; for Food is not more sweet to a hungry Body, than *the Desire accomplish'd* is to a longing Soul, *Prov. 13. 19.*

Now the *Desires and Petitions* here particularly refer'd to, may be thus distinguish'd: The Desires are the inward Longings and Breathings of the Soul; the Petitions are the outward Expressions and Significations of them by the Tongue: and the beseeching of God to accept and fulfil both these, is the same Request with that of the Psalmist; *Let the Words of my Mouth, and the Meditations of my Heart be now and ever acceptable in thy sight, O Lord my Strength and my Redeemer;* *Psal. 19. 14.* All which we beg upon the account of the relation we bear to him, as his Children and Servants.

But

But yet we ask not these things in absolute and indefinite terms, but only conditionally, and in a qualify'd sense; *As may be most expedient for us*: Whereby we shew our Submission to the divine Will, and say in effect with our Blessed Saviour, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done*. We are of our selves but too childish in our Wishes, and extravagant in our Desires, asking things many times that are more hurtful than beneficial to us; in which cases the Mercy is far greater in the Denial, than in the Grant of such Petitions. And therefore our Church teaches us to bound our Desires by the Rules of Expediency, and refer our selves wholly to the Wisdom and Goodness of our Maker, who knows better what is fit for us, than we do for our selves: And this we should do chiefly with respect to these earthly things, such as the Profits, Pleasures, and Honours of this World; in which we are too apt to exceed, asking them immoderately, unseasonably, and to our own detriment: which should teach us with *Agar* not to pray for Abundance, but to be *fed with Food convenient for us*; and, as our Saviour hath taught us, to ask every day *our daily Bread*, not Dainties and Superfluities to feed our Lusts and Luxury, which will turn the Provision into the Poison of our Body. Wherefore let us limit our Desires in these things, and leave it to God to judg what is fittest for us; willing him to carve out for us, not as we may crave for our selves, but as he shall think most expedient for us. But yet for the spiritual good things that concern the Welfare of our Souls, such as the Pardon of Sin, the Favour of God, the Graces of the Spirit, and the like; these things always tending to Good, and never turning to any Evil, are to be desir'd absolutely without any reserve or limitation, and with such earnestness and importunity, as will take no denial: which is the best and surest way to obtain them.

Of this kind, this Prayer concludes with two principal Petitions, to wit, *To grant us in this World Knowledge of his Truth, And in the World to come Life everlasting*. For the

1<sup>st</sup>, The Knowledge of Divine Truths is not only the way to, but a main ingredient of our eternal Happiness; which in a great measure consists in *knowing God, even as we are known*. This is Life eternal (saith St. John) *to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*; John 17. 3.

Knowledge is the highest and most principal Perfection of the Soul; and the Height and Excellency of the Object or thing Known, mightily heightens and enhances the Value of that Perfection: and consequently the Knowledge of God and his Truth being the most excellent of all Objects, must be the most sublime and excellent Knowledge. At this rate we find St. Paul valuing it, *Phil. 3. 8. Doubtless* (saith he) *I count all things but Loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* This is the Knowledge of God and Divine Truths, that we are here taught to pray for: And that not barely in the Notion or empty Speculation of them, which rests only in the Brain, or glides upon the Tongue, but such a practical and experimental Knowledge of them, as sinks into the Heart, and influences all the Powers of the Soul; that we may find by experience the Love and Grace of God actually stirring within us, and feel the fulfilling of his Promises. This we are above all things to pray for, and to ask not with faint languishing Wishes, but with earnest and longing Desires, striving with God in Prayer for it, and using all good means prescribed for the attaining of it.

And that because this Knowledge of God, and his Truth as it is in Jesus, will not only carry us with comfort thro all the Stages of this Life, but will in the World to come bring us to Life everlasting: Where we shall know him more perfectly, and enjoy him for ever; still living in his presence, and ever partaking of the Joy and Glory of his Countenance, which will make our Happiness compleat, and confirm us in the Fruition of endless Bliss and Glory. All which we beg in the Name and Mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord, by whose Merits alone we can hope to attain them: To him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Praise and Glory for evermore. Amen.





## DISCOURSE LI.

2 COR. XIII. last Verse:

*The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.*

**T**HE Prayers of the daily Morning-Service being dispatch'd, there remains only the Blessing, with which, according to the Custom of all Religious Assemblies, the People are wont to be dismiss'd. And that is express'd here in the words of the Apostle; *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.* Of which I am now to treat. In order whereunto, you may observe, that these words are St. Paul's last Salutation of the *Corinthians* at his departing from them; wherein he takes his leave of them with solemn Wishes of the highest and greatest Blessings. And this hath given rise to a common and laudable Practice among Christians, in all civil and religious Conversation, to part with blessing and wishing well to each other.

In common and civil Conversation, the term of *Godb'm'ye* is the Contraction of *God be with you*; and *Farewel* is a Wish of *Welfare*.

In religious Conversation this is more punctually and solemnly observ'd; for the Sacred Assemblies never break up without a Blessing, in which the People are recommended to the Grace, and Love, and Fellowship of the whole Trinity.

Accordingly, our Church begins and ends its Service with these pious and publick Salutations: for the Prayers after the Creed are introduc'd with, *The Lord be with you*; and they are shut up with, *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all.*

The pronouncing of this last final Benediction, being an Act of Authority, hath been ever done by the principal Person in the Congregation; for without contradiction (saith the Apostle) *the less is blessed of the greater*, Heb. 7. 7.

Sometimes this was pronounc'd by the King, when present; who was *Persona mixta cum Sacerdote*. So we read of David, that when he had made an end of offering Burnt-Offerings and Peace-Offerings, he blessed the People in the name of the Lord of Hosts; 2 Sam. 6. 18. But this he did rather as a Prophet than a King, for blessing the People was chiefly the Priest's Office. Solomon likewise did the same; for so it was, that when he had made an end of praying all his Prayer and Supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the Altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees, with his hands spread up to Heaven: And he stood and blessed all the Congregation of Israel with a loud Voice, saying, *Blessed be the Lord, that hath given Rest unto his People*, according to all that he promis'd, &c. 1 Kings 8. 54, 55.

The Jews had a Form of Blessing commanded by God, to be deliver'd only by Aaron and his Sons, and confin'd to the Priest's Office; of which we read, *Numb. 6. 23, 24. Speak unto Aaron and his Sons, saying, On this wise shall ye bless the Children of Israel, The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.* Which Form is deriv'd down and found in our Liturgy to this day.

The People of the Jews receiv'd this and other Blessings of the Priests with great Reverence; for they kneel'd down and bow'd their heads at the Priest's pronouncing of it: So we read, that when Ezra blessed the Lord, all the People answer'd Amen, with lifting up their Hands; and they bow'd their Heads, and worship'd the Lord with their Faces to the ground; Neh. 8. 6. In this humble posture of Reverence they generally receiv'd the Priest's Blessing; for we read in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, that when the Service was finish'd, the High Priest went down, and lifted up his hands over the Congregation, to give the Blessing of the Lord with his Lips; and they bow'd down themselves to worship the Lord, that they might receive the Blessing from the Most High; Chap. 50. 23.

This religious Practice begun first in the Jewish, was after transfer'd to the Christian Church; for in the Liturgy

of *St. Chrysostom*, we find, the Deacon prepar'd the People for the Blessing with these words, *Bow down your selves to the Blessing*. And still all Christian Churches conclude their publick Service with a Blessing, probably the same with which *St. Paul* concluded most of his Epistles: which was to be pronounc'd by the Bishop, if present; or otherwise, by the Priest that officiated.

And the same is order'd in our Church to this day; tho (to our shame be it spoken) it be not observ'd with the Decency and Devotion of former times. In the primitive and following Ages, it was decreed by Councils, that none should depart out of the Church before the Blessing was given. And indeed it was then held in so high estimation, that none would willingly go away without it: tho too many now have slight thoughts of it, and shew but little regard to it. Whereas,

Did they but rightly consider the Efficacy and Virtue of this holy Benediction, pronounc'd by the authoriz'd Ministers of Christ, they would value it at a higher rate, and receive it with greater Reverence; yea, they would bless the Mouth that utters it, and never depart the publick Assemblies of the Church without it: especially considering, that God himself is pleas'd to concur with and confirm the Priest's Blessing, and to fulfil the Desire of his Lips. So he declar'd, when he order'd *Aaron* and his Sons to bless the People, and to put his Name upon them, that he himself would bless them, Numb. 6. last. signifying to us, that God is pleas'd to bless us by the mouth of his Ministers, and that he will ratify in Heaven, what is thus done by them on earth. To the same purpose our Saviour spake to his Apostles, when he bid them to bless the Persons and Places where they came with Wishes of Peace; saying, *Peace be unto you*. And if they were Sons of Peace, and so capable of receiving the benefit of it, their Blessing should rest upon them; if not, it should not be lost, but return again into their own bosom: which it could not be said to do, unless some Virtue had gone out from them, and accompany'd the Blessing. For which see *Mat. 10. 13.* and *Luke 10. 5.*

But to come to the Form of Blessing it self, as it is prescrib'd by our Church, which is taken from *St. Paul's* Salutation of the *Corinthians* in the words of our Text, and contains a hearty Wish or Prayer for three things:

First,



*First, For the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Secondly, For the Love of God. And,*

*Thirdly, For the Fellowship or Communion of the Holy Ghost.*

All which being matters of great importance, will deserve to be particularly consider'd : and the rather, because tho the Blessing under the Law consisted chiefly in Wishes of temporal good things, such as coming to the Land of *Canaan*, and enjoying there long Life and happy Days ; yet the Blessing now under the Gospel contains more spiritual and lasting Benefits, and such as the whole Trinity concur in, to make us compleatly and eternally happy, as will appear in the handling of them. In order to which, we must here observe,

That tho God the Father be the first Person in the Order of the Trinity, yet because we cannot come to him, or expect any Favour from him, but by the Merits and Mediation of the Son ; therefore the Blessing here begins,

*First, With the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ; which we first pray may be bestow'd upon us, saying, The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.* Grace in general signifies the same with Favour or Good-will, and is the Spring from whence all Bounty and Benefits flow : *Thy Servant hath found Grace in thy sight,* Gen. 19. 19. that is, hath found Favour and Good-liking. In this sense Grace is in common attributed to all the three Persons in the Trinity, because we receive Grace and Favour from each. But there are some peculiar and distinguishing Acts of Grace and Favour, which are ascrib'd to each in particular ; as that of Creation to the Father, of Redemption to the Son, of Sanctification to the Holy Ghost. And therefore by *the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* here, we are to understand those peculiar Acts of Favour and Mercy, that are ascrib'd to and we receive from him : and they are the Benefits of his Passion, the Redemption, and Salvation of our Souls, which are the Purchase of his Death and Satisfaction. These things we could never obtain or procure for our selves by our own power ; nor have we any Merits of our own, to deserve or challenge them ; there was nothing but our Misery and forlorn Condition, that could move him to pity and relieve us : which

being pure Acts of Grace and Favour vouchsafed to us by the Son of God, are here truly stil'd *the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*. So the Holy Scripture generally expresses it, *Not by Works of Righteousness which you have done* (saith the Apostle) *but by Grace are ye saved; not of your selves, but by the Gift of God*: Eph. 2. 8, 9. *Ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* (saith he to the Corinthians) *that tho he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye thro his Poverty might be rich*; 1 Cor. 8. 9. This is sometimes call'd *the Riches of his Grace*, or the free Imputation of his Righteousness for our Justification. In this sense, the *Grace of God* is said to abound unto many, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ; Rom. 5. 15. 1 Tim. 1. 9. In short, Christ's Death is the Spring of our eternal Life, and his Blood is the Fountain from whence all our Mercies flow.

Now to wish this *Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* to any, is to desire all the Advantages of his Death and Sufferings, all that he hath purchas'd for or promis'd to us, as the Pardon of Sins, the justifying of our Persons, and the saving of our Souls; which are all Acts of Grace and Favour obtain'd for us by Jesus Christ: Which is the first thing wish'd or pray'd for in this divine Benediction.

But because the Benefits purchas'd by the Son are bestow'd by the Father, therefore we wish,

*Secondly, That the Love of God the Father may be with us all.* 'Twas the Love of the Father that sent the Son into the World for our Redemption; so St. John declares, *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

The Love of God in general is that kind Affection he bears to all his Creatures, discover'd by Acts of Bounty and Beneficence of all kinds. But he hath a more special and peculiar Love for his Church and People, whom he adopts into his Family, makes his Sons and Heirs, *Heirs of God and Joint-Heirs with Jesus Christ*. Of this the Apostle speaks, 1 John 3. 1. *Behold! what manner of Love the Father hath bestow'd upon us, that we should be call'd the Sons of God.* By this Love of his he takes care of us as a Father doth of his Children, providing all Necessaries for us here in this World, and an eternal Inheritance in the World to come.



Now to wish and pray for this Love of God, is to have recourse to the Author and Fountain of all our Mercies; for he is the first Link in the Chain of Man's Salvation, or the great Wheel that sets all the rest in motion; 'twas he that gave his Son to die for us, and sent his Holy Spirit to comfort us; 'tis he that supplies all our Wants, and from whom we expect all our Happiness. These are the blessed Effects of this divine Love; all which the Minister, in pronouncing this Blessing, heartily wishes unto the People, and by God's Authority dispenses these Favours to all that are qualify'd to receive them. But there is one thing more wish'd and dispens'd in this Blessing; and that is,

*Thirdly, The Fellowship or Communion of the Holy Ghost.* Tho God the Father contriv'd, and God the Son effected the Work of Redemption for us, yet 'tis God the Holy Ghost that applies all the Virtue and Benefits of it to us. And as the best Remedy without Application is of no use or worth, so neither can all that God or Christ have done be of any avail to us, without the Influence and Assistance of the Holy Ghost; for 'tis that enables us to know, and inclines us to receive them. The Knowledge of God in Christ is so entirely owing to this Holy Spirit, that the Apostle tells us, *That no Man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 12. 3.* And the Efficacy of all the Means of Grace is so fully ascrib'd to this Holy Spirit, that he is said to *work all our Works in us and for us, and to work in us all in all; ver. 6.* So that this Fellowship or Communion of the Holy Ghost consists in his concurring with us in the holy Ordinances of the Church, and communicating to us his Gifts and Graces in and by them; instructing us by the one, and sanctifying us by the other. Hence we are said to be regenerated and born again in Baptism *by Water and the Holy Ghost, John 3. 5.* St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, that they were washed from the Guilt and Pollution of their former Sins *by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 6. 11.* And in his Epistle to Titus, he ascribes our Salvation, not to any Works of Righteousness which we have done, but to the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Tit. 3. 5. In these divine Acts and Operations upon the Minds of Christians, consists the Fellowship of the Spirit, mention'd *Philip. 2. 1.*



Now to wish or pray for this Fellowship or Communion of the Holy Ghost in the behalf of the People, is to recommend them to the Mercy and blessed Influences of the Holy Spirit, to desire his Presence with them, to communicate his Gifts and Graces, and to impart his holy Comforts to them.

Thus we see the Sense of this parting Blessing pronounced by the Priest in the close of our Prayers; which contains all the peculiar Acts of Mercy and Bounty, promis'd and confer'd by each of the three Persons in the Holy Trinity.

And now what can we ask or desire for our selves or others, which is not included in this Blessing? Here is all that is necessary for Soul and Body; and that not only here in this Life, but in that which is to come. Here is *the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to pardon our Sins, and to justify our Persons: Here is *the Love of God the Father*, to supply all our Wants, and to furnish us with all that is good for us: And here is *the Communion of the Holy Ghost*, to sanctify us with his Grace, and to prepare us for Glory.

Wherefore, lastly, let us set a high value upon this Apostolical Blessing, which hath been ever held in great estimation in the Christian Church: let us not turn our backs upon it, nor depart the Congregation without it; but stay till it be solemnly given, and receive it with Reverence from the Minister's mouth. And while it is pronouncing, let us earnestly desire the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to do away our Sins, and to clothe us with his Righteousness.

Let us long for the Love of God the Father, to inflame our Affections, and draw our Hearts unto him.

Let us breathe after the Fellowship and Communion of the Holy Ghost, to renew and comfort us here, and fit us for a more intimate and uninterrupted Communion with the Saints of Heaven; to which, God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THUS

**T**HUS I have gone through with the several Parts and Passages of the Morning-Prayer, as 'tis prescrib'd in the publick Liturgy of our Church.

I shall next proceed to the Evening-Service, as 'tis there directed; which being for the most part the same with the former, will be more quickly and easily dispatch'd.



D d 4

The



*The EVENING-PRAYER, in  
what it differs from the MORN-  
ING.*

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DISCOURSE LII.

St. LUKE I. 46, 47, &c.

*And Mary said, My Soul doth magnify the Lord,  
and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;  
for he hath regarded the low Estate of his Hand-  
maiden: For behold! from henceforth all Genera-  
tions shall call me blessed, &c.*



HAVING finish'd the Explication of our Morning-Prayer, and thereby shew'd the Piety and Pertinence of each part of it, to the Necessities of our Soul, and the Ends of true Devotion: I come now to the Evening-Service; which being for the far greatest part the same with the Morning, I shall not need to repeat, but refer the Reader to it.

The only difference between them lies in the Hymns that follow the two Lessons, and the Collects that follow the Creed and the Lord's Prayer; which being distinct from



from those in the Morning-Service, shall be here particularly explain'd.

I begin with the Hymns that follow the first Lesson in the Evening-Prayer; and the first of these is in the words of our Text, *My Soul doth magnify the Lord, &c.* 'Tis from these first words of it, that 'tis stil'd *The Magnificat*, or the Song of the Blessed Virgin, which she compos'd after the Message of the Angel, who told her, that she should conceive in her Womb the Son of God, and be the Mother of our Saviour; which Message tho she at first distrusted, yet finding it after fulfill'd in her, she brake out into this divine Song of Praise, recorded here by St. Luke, *And Mary said, my Soul doth magnify the Lord, &c.* This sacred Hymn is found in all the antient Liturgies, and is still retain'd in most of the Reform'd Churches, as it is in ours to this day. In it we may observe,

*First*, The Virgin Mary's pious Thanksgiving and Rejoicing in God, in these words, *My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

*Secondly*, The Reasons she had for so doing: And they were, (1.) The great Favour shew'd to her; *for he hath regarded the Lowliness of his Handmaiden.* (2.) The high Honour that from thence accru'd to her; *For behold! from henceforth all Generations shall call me blessed.* Both which she wholly ascrib'd to the Greatness and Goodness of her Maker; *For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and his Mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all Generations.*

From whence she takes occasion to magnify the Power and Providence of God, in his different Dealings with the Proud and the Humble, the Mighty and the Meek, the Rich and the Poor: *He hath shew'd strength with his Arm (saith she) and scatter'd the Proud in the Imaginations of their Hearts: He hath put down the Mighty from their Seat, and hath exalted the Humble and Meek: He hath filled the Hungry with good things, and the Rich he hath sent empty away.* All which the Experience of the Mercy vouchsaf'd to her, and the Observation of the Course of Providence towards others, made her thankfully to acknowledg and admire. Finally, she recounts his

*Remembring his Mercy, and helping his Servant Israel, as he promised to our Forefathers, Abraham and his Seed for ever; as an Encouragement to relie upon him in all Estates and Conditions. These are the principal parts of this Hymn, which must be more particularly consider'd. And,*

*First, Of the pious Thanksgiving and Rejoicing in God, with which it begins, in these words; My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.* The Blessed Virgin, who was made the happy Instrument of Man's Salvation, by bringing the Saviour of the World into it, was transported with Joy and Gratitude at so high a Privilege; and being ravish'd with the Thoughts of it within, could not forbear venting it in joyful Expressions without. And that not from the Tongue or the Teeth outward, but from the Heart and Soul within: 'twas from her Soul that she magnify'd the Lord; and from the Abundance of the Heart deeply affected with the Sense of the Divine Goodness, her Mouth utter'd those Expressions of Thankfulness. She did it not in shew and appearance only, like those that bless with their Mouths and curse in their Hearts, but in reality and truth; her Heart and her Tongue went together, and the Fruit of her Lips, as well as of her Womb, shew'd her to be full of Grace. She stiles it her self an Act of her Soul, proceeding from within, the Seat of all Sincerity and Truth: with this it was that she magnify'd the Lord.

To magnify is to make a thing great; and when 'tis apply'd to the Lord, it signifies the setting forth of his infinite Greatness, and advancing his Glory as high as possible. This the Virgin *Mary* here did in this Song of Thanksgiving: she magnify'd not her self, or her own Excellencies; for that would be to lessen the Lord, and greatnessen her self; but gave all the Glory to God, the Author and Giver of both. She ascrib'd nothing to her own Worth or Merits, nor did she swell with Pride or Self-conceit for the glorious Privilege vouchsaf'd to her, but was meek and lowly in Heart, and depress'd her self to magnify the Lord.

Moreover, she adds Joy to her Thanksgiving, for *her Spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour.* Not with the carnal Joy or Mirth of the World, which *Solomon* compares to the crackling of Thorns under a Pot, that is all noise and blaze;



blaze; but a spiritual Joy and Rejoicing in God, which is more lasting and divine. She rejoic'd in God incarnate, in God that was made Man, by taking Flesh in her Womb, and by being form'd of her Substance; which was enough to exhilarate her Spirit, and create in her Extasies of Joy. Again, she rejoic'd in God her Saviour; where the Mother of Jesus disdains not to call her Son her Saviour, and to receive eternal Life from him, who receiv'd a natural Life from her; which could not but be to her matter of great joy.

But what were the Blessed Virgin's Reasons for these thankful and joyful Acknowledgments? Why, they were partly for the great Favour, and partly for the high Honour done to her. The first in these words, *For he hath regarded the low Estate of his Handmaiden*: the other in these, *For behold! from henceforth all Generations shall call me blessed*. For the

(1.) The Regard to her whom she stiles the Lord's Handmaid, was her being singled out from among all Women to be the Mother of our Lord, and the Parent of her Saviour; whereby she was prefer'd above all of the highest Rank and Quality of her Sex. It might be thought and expected, that if the Son of God would vouchsafe to be born of a Woman, he should have chose to be descended from the greatest Queen or Empress upon earth, and to receive his Birth from one of the highest and noblest Extraction; but instead of that, he made choice of a poor mean Daughter of *Israel*, the Virgin *Mary*; a Descendant indeed from *David*, but found in an obscure corner of the World, far remov'd from the Tribe and House of her Progenitors, and reduc'd to a low and despicable Condition: and yet she it was that was chosen out of all the Daughters of *Adam*, to be advanc'd to an Honour above all other Mortals, to have a God for her Son, to clothe him with a part of her own Substance, to nourish him with her Milk, to hang on her Breasts, and to carry him about in her Arms; an Honour never confer'd upon, or attain'd to by any, even the greatest Princesses of the World. This Honour was congratulated to her by an Angel from Heaven, for none upon earth was great enough to do it, *Luke* 1. 28. *An Angel said unto her, Hail thou that art highly favour'd, the Lord is with thee*. And she her self here modestly



modestly and thankfully acknowledges it, in saying, *He hath regarded the low Estate of his Handmaiden.*

But the particular Honour or Title assign'd to her from Heaven upon this account, was given her by the Angel that saluted her, saying, *Blessed art thou among Women*; which the Holy Virgin thankfully accepted, and from thence foretold, that all Generations should call her blessed. An Angel began it, and the Christian Church hath ever follow'd it; which hath ever since given her the Title of the *Blessed or Ever-blessed Virgin.*

And yet in all this she arrogated nothing to her self, but attributed all to the Divine Favour and Goodness; *For he that is mighty hath magnified me* (saith she) *and holy is his Name.* She returns the Honour to him that gave it, and thankfully owns from whom she receiv'd it: because God had magnify'd her, she resolv'd to magnify him; and instead of raising Trophies to her own Name or Memory, she ascrib'd all the Honour and Glory to the Name of God, saying with the Psalmist, *Holy and reverend is his Name,* Psal. III. 9.

Neither did she engross the Favours of Heaven, or confine the divine Mercy and Goodness to her self; but solemnly declares, that *his Mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all Generations.* Tho she had large and liberal experience of God's Bounty and Goodness to her, yet she would not limit it to her own time or self, but let the World know, that all his humble and faithful Servants in all Ages may depend upon his Mercy, and rest assur'd, that if they love and fear him, they shall find the like. And tho their own Weakness may seem to hinder, and the Strength and Insolence of their Adversaries may create in them some Doubts, yet they may safely rely upon the Divine Power; For

*He sheweth Strength with his Arm, and scattereth the Proud in the Imaginations of their Heart.* In which words the Blessed Virgin seems to have respect to those of the Prophet Isaiah, chap. 52. 9, 10. *Break forth into Joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his People, he hath redeem'd Jerusalem; he hath made bare his Arm in the eyes of all Nations, and all the Ends of the Earth shall see the Salvation of our God.* As also to those of the Psalmist; *He bringeth the Counsel of the Heathen to nought, and maketh the Devices of the People to be of none effect,* Psal. 33. 10.

From

From hence she takes occasion, in the next words, to shew God Almighty's different Dealings:

1st, With the Mighty and the Meek; saying, *He hath put down the Mighty from their Seat, and hath exalted the Humble and Meek*; or, as the new Translation renders it, *them of low degree*. St. Peter speaks to the same purpose, that *God resisteth the Proud, and sheweth Grace only to the Humble*: He sets himself against the Lofty and High-minded, who assume more Honour and Power to themselves than belongs to them, and beholds the Proud afar off; but he dwells with the humble and contrite Spirit, and they that are most lowly in their own eyes, are most lovely in his. This Lesson our Blessed Saviour himself sought to instil into his Disciples, when he saw them courting Preheminence, and striving who amongst them should be greatest; telling them, that *he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*, Mat. 23. 12. Of both these, History and Experience will furnish us with many Instances.

*Lucifer* the Son of Morning affecting to be like the most High, and lifting himself above the Stars of Heaven, was abased to the nethermost Hell, and from the blissful Regions of Light and Glory, was cast down to the black Abyss of outer and eternal Darkness; *Isa.* 14. 12, 13, &c.

*Pharaoh* exalting himself above the Lord of Hosts, and denying Obedience to him, was chastis'd and humbled by the meanest Creatures; the Flies and the Caterpillars being too hard for him, who thought himself a Match for his Maker, *Exod.* 5.

*Nebuchadnezzar* aspiring to the Honour of a God, was sunk beneath the Dignity of a Man, and turn'd a grazing among the Beasts of the Field.

And *Herod*, for taking to himself the Glory that was due to God only, became a Monument of divine Justice, and was eaten up of Worms.

Thus doth God put down the Mighty from their Seat, and our own Experience and Observation may afford us Instances of the frequent Falls of ambitious and aspiring Spirits.

Neither want we sufficient Evidence and Examples of God's exalting the Humble and Meek. *Jacob* for thinking himself less than the least of God's Mercies, had heap'd upon him the choicest of all his Favours, being made the Head and Father of all the Tribes of *Israel*. *Abraham* for



for humbling himself to dust and ashes, was made the Father of the Faithful; and *in his Seed have all the Nations of the Earth been blessed.* David for abasing himself to a Worm and no Man, was exalted to be a King, and had his Shepherd's Crook turn'd into a Scepter. And here the Virgin Mary, who descended from his Race, acknowledges that the Most High had *regarded the Lowliness of his Hand-maiden*, and rais'd her from an obscure low Condition, to those heights of Honour, that were as much above her Deserts, as beside her Expectation.

But above all, her Son, our Saviour, was for his Humility and low Condescension most highly exalted; for *emptying himself of all worldly Glory*, he was advanc'd to the highest pitch of Glory in the Kingdom of Heaven; for *taking upon him the Form of a Servant*, he became Master and Lord of all; and for *making himself of no reputation*, he had a Name given him, that is above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, *of things in Heaven, in Earth, and under the Earth*; Phil. 2. 9, 10. Thus hath God consecrated Meanness above all the glittering Shows of Ambition and Vain-glory; and prefer'd a pious Poverty before all the Pomp and Pageantry of the World: Which leads us to consider,

2dly, God's different Dispensations towards the Poor and the Rich, in the next words; *He filleth the Hungry with good things, and the Rich he sends empty away.* Where by the Hungry are meant such as *hunger and thirst after Righteousness*, whose Appetite runs mostly to the things above: *these he filleth with good things*, that is, with the Treasures and Dainties of Heaven; he replenishes them with Grace here, and will e'er long fill them brim-full of Glory. By the Rich here we understand such as, like those in the Church of Laodicea, think themselves *rich and abounding in Knowledge*, and to *have lack of nothing*; when all the while they are *poor and miserable, and blind and naked.* These he passeth by without any regard, and being full of themselves, he *sends empty away.*

Lastly, The Blessed Virgin minds us of God's *remembering his Mercy*, and *helping his Servant Israel*, as he promised to our Forefathers Abraham, and his Seed for ever: that is, by this Birth of the *Messias* conceiv'd in her Womb, and in the Fulness of Time born of her, he hath remembered the Mercy promis'd to the Patriarchs of old, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, with whom he made a Covenant



to be a God to them and their Seed for ever ; which Covenant he hath made good by helping his Servant *Israel*, that is *Jacob*, from whom all the Tribes of *Israel* sprang : and hath likewise fulfil'd the same to *Abraham*, in the Blessed Virgin, who came from his Seed, and in whose Son all the Nations of the Earth are blessed.

This is briefly the Sense of this pious Hymn of the Virgin *Mary*, wherein she calls upon all Christians to praise the Lord with her, and to magnify his Name together. For tho she was dignify'd above all Women, to be singled out to be the Mother of our Lord, yet the Issue of her Womb was a publick Blessing to all Mankind : And therefore we are all to join with her in magnifying the Lord, and must rejoyce together in God our Saviour.

(2.) From God's shewing so great Favour and Regard to his Handmaiden, let us learn to give her her just Praise, and to render the Honour due to so high a Privilege. Indeed the highest Honours next to divine, of right belong to her : We may not indeed worship her, pray to or adore her, for that is the peculiar Homage that is due to God only ; but the greatest of all civil Honours are to be paid to her, as to honour her Name and Memory, to celebrate her Vertues, to call her Blessed, and never to mention her without Respect. In a word, let us avoid both Extremes, of giving her too much, or too little Honour ; i. e. let us not diminish her due Praises, nor give her groundless and extravagant Commendations, but retain the Language of Antiquity ; let the Mother be honour'd, and the Son ador'd.

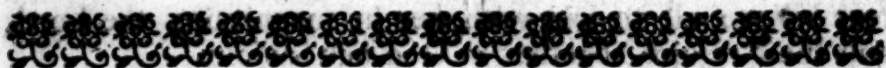
(3.) From God's preferring a Woman of a low and mean Condition, before the honourable Ladies and stately Dames of *Israel*, let us learn to despise, or at least think more meanly of all the Greatness and Grandeur of the World : *Not many wise, not many Noble are call'd* (saith the Apostle) *but God hath chosen the weak things of the World to confound the mighty ; yea, the base things of the World, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.* Let us not then set our Hearts upon these gilded Vanities ; for to admire and dote upon these things, is to be fond of Trifles, and like great Children to be at play with Babies.

(4.) From the blessed Virgin's Observation of God's pulling down the High and Mighty, and exalting the Humble and Meek, let us learn to subdue all Pride and Haughtiness

of

of Spirit, and to adorn our Souls with Meekness and Humility; for God delighteth to honour these Graces, and the Most High regardeth those that are low in their own eyes: humble your selves therefore under the mighty hand of God, and he shall exalt you in due time.

Lastly, From God's remembering his Mercy to the House of Israel, and fulfilling his Promise to Abraham and his Seed, we may learn to trust in his Mercy, to rely upon his Word, and to cast our selves and our Hopes of Salvation upon his Truth and Faithfulness; for he hath provided a Saviour for us, who is able to save to the uttermost, and there is no Salvation in any other.



## DISCOURSE LIII.

PSALM XCVIII. 1, to the end.

*O sing unto the Lord a new Song; for he hath done marvellous things: With his own Right Hand, and with his Holy Arm, hath he gotten himself the Victory, &c.*

**T**HIS Psalm of David is the second Hymn after the first Lesson of Evening-Prayer; the Sense and Design whereof is much the same with the foregoing *Magnificat* of the Blessed Virgin; which was in a great measure taken from it, as may be seen, ver. 4, 5. It contains,

*First, A Call or Exhortation to Joy and Rejoicing in God; Sing unto the Lord a new Song.*

*Secondly, The Ground or Reasons for so doing; For he hath done marvellous things, &c.*

*Thirdly, The Way and Manner of expressing this Joy, and that is with vocal and instrumental Musick; Sing to the Harp with Trumpets and Shawns, &c.*

*Fourthly, The Persons concern'd in it; which are, The Sea and Land, the round World, and they that dwell therein.*

*These*

These things are the Sum of this Hymn, and must therefore be briefly handled. And,

*First*, Of the Call or Exhortation to Joy and Rejoicing in God; *O sing unto the Lord a new Song.* This seems to be a Summons of holy *David, the Sweet-singer of Israel*, to praise God upon some new and fresh occasion; that is, either upon some private Deliverance of his own from the Cruelty of *Saul* and the *Philistines*, or upon some more public Deliverance of the Church from the Rage and Malice of its Enemies: And both signify this to us, that upon every new Mercy and Deliverance we ought to renew our Praises and Thanksgivings.

But some understand this Psalm in a more spiritual and mystical sense, as relating to the new Dispensation under the Gospel, in opposition to the old one under the Law; the former being more clear, and containing new and greater Wonders of the divine Power and Goodness than the latter, calls for new and higher Songs of Praise: And if *Abraham* of old rejoic'd upon a remote and obscure sight of Christ's Day and the Dawning of the Gospel, how much greater Joy ought we to renew upon a much brighter View and Revelation of both? The Fathers under the Old Testament saw these things but thro a Glass darkly, they beheld them veil'd with Types and Shadows, and dark Figures in the Glass of Prophecy; but we behold them with open face, in the actual Presence and Accomplishment of them. And if the Patriarchs and Prophets of old sang Praises to God under the dark Shades and Sacrifices of the Law, how much more chearfully should we sing a new Song under the Sunshine of the Gospel? This is what the Psalmist here invites us to; and this our Church, by daily renewing our Devotion, and keeping up a constant fresh Sense of the divine Love, would make it every day a new Song.

But what is the Ground or Motive of this new Song? Why, that the Psalmist, in the next words, ascribes to the miraculous Works which God hath wrought for his Church; *for he hath done marvellous things.* Now these marvellous things are meant, not only of the wonderful Works of Creation, which are indeed great, and are to be still marvellous in our eyes, but chiefly of the Work of our Redemption, which is more miraculous and astonish-



ing; for herein his infinite Wisdom, Justice, and Mercy do more illustriously appear, in making us new Creatures, when we had undone and destroy'd the old: in the first Creation he rais'd us indeed from nothing, but in the second he rais'd us from a Condition that was worse than nothing; and hath now made us eternally happy, who had before made our selves unspeakably miserable: and that by such a way too, as was as much above our Wit to contrive, as it was above our Power to compass. And because the Difficulties and Opposition that lie in our way, are too great for us either to remove or conquer; *he with his own right Hand and with his holy Arm hath gotten himself the Victory*: which words, if literally taken, are an Acknowledgment of David's Successes over his temporal Enemies, and ascribing them wholly unto God; that 'twas not his own Hand or Arm, but God's Right Hand and Arm that had gotten him his Victory. But if we understand the words, as they are generally taken, in a spiritual sense, they are an Acknowledgment of Christ's Victory over the spiritual Enemies and Opposers of his Church; whereby he hath subdu'd Sin in us by the Power of his Grace, and vanquish'd Satan for us by destroying his Kingdom, and given us the Victory over Death and Hell by the virtue of his Resurrection.

These are great and marvellous things indeed, which his own right Hand and his holy Arm hath alone effected for us; for tho he sometimes makes use of human Power as Instruments to defeat the Designs both of the temporal and spiritual Enemies of his Church, yet all their Efficacy and Success is intirely owing to the Aid and Influence of his holy and almighty Arm.

These great things we could neither know nor bring to pass for our selves, had not God graciously done them for and discover'd them to us. And therefore for the Comfort of his People, and the Conviction of their Adversaries,

*The Lord hath declar'd his Salvation, his Righteousness hath he openly shew'd in the sight of the Heathen.* God himself hath been pleas'd to reveal this Mystery of Salvation to us, which else could never have enter'd into our Hearts to conceive, or our Heads to contrive for our selves: yea, he hath hereby made his Wisdom and Justice so apparent, that the very Heathens cannot but see a divine Hand in it, and perceive that it is his Work. By this likewise,

He

He hath remembered his Mercy and Truth to the House of Israel, and all the Ends of the World have seen the Salvation of our God: that is, God by sending his Son to be the Saviour of Mankind, hath fulfil'd the Promise made to Abraham, of blessing all Nations in his Seed; and by a Daughter of Israel hath rais'd up a mighty Salvation for us in the House of his Servant David. To this Son of his God hath made his word good, of giving him the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for his Possession. His Mercy mov'd him to make this Promise, and his Truth hath engag'd him to perform it; and he hath been mindful of both, by scattering the blessed Influences of his Light and Bounty over the face of the whole Earth, and causing all Nations to see and partake of the Salvation of God.

Thus the Psalmist having set forth the Greatness and Glory, the Goodness and Excellency of God's Works, which are wonderful in themselves, and marvellous in our eyes; he renews again his Exhortation to Joy and Rejoicing in God, ver. 4, 5, &c. *Shew your selves joyful unto the Lord, all ye Lands; sing, rejoice, and give thanks. Praise the Lord upon the Harp, &c.* This will lead us to consider,

Thirdly, The Way and Manner of expressing the Joy we are call'd to; and that is, partly by singing, which implies vocal Musick; and partly, by playing on the Harp and other Instruments, which imply instrumental Musick; both which we find here prescrib'd and practis'd by holy David. For the

1<sup>st</sup>, He wills us to *make a joyful noise unto the Lord, to make a loud noise, to rejoice and sing Praise*; ver. 4. which cannot be so well done, as by the Voice; and therefore we find it as early used in Divine Worship, as any where else. We read of the Songs of Moses, of Deborah and Barak, of Asaph, and many others; but above all, we have the Songs or Psalms of David, who upon every new occasion compos'd and sang a new Song, all which are collected and put together in the Book of Psalms; wherein he calls upon us, upon the Contemplation of God's Works, his Mercies and Deliverances, to sing forth his Praises. The whole Book abounds with Calls and Exhortations hereunto, particularly in the 33d Psalm, ver. 3. he wills us upon all new occasions to *sing unto the Lord a new Song,*



and to sing Praises unto him lustily with a good courage; or, as the new Translation hath it, *skilfully with a loud noise*; that is, with Art and Melody, not with jarring and ungrateful Sounds.

After David, his Son Salamon compos'd the Book of Canticles, call'd the Song of Solomon; which for the Wisdom of the Author, and the Excellency of the Matter, is stil'd, *The Song of Songs*, being the most divine and sweetest of all Songs.

In the New Testament we read of a Choir of Angels singing at our Blessed Saviour's Nativity. After which, we read of the Hymns of the Blessed Virgin, of Zacharias and Simeon, in the two first Chapters of St. Luke. From whence St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians, *to speak to themselves in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs; singing and making melody in their Hearts unto the Lord*; Ephes. 5. 19. And the same Apostle wills the Colossians, and in them all Christians, *to admonish one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing with Grace in their Hearts unto the Lord*; Col. 3. 16. By which it appears, that singing hath been enjoin'd and practis'd both in the Jewish and Christian Church; and none but a few Sons of Discord have ever question'd the Lawfulness or Expedience of it in the Worship of God.

Singing, you know, is a token of Joy, that mightily chears and revives the Spirits, and that is a very becoming Disposition in the Service of God; *Is any merry?* (saith St. James) *let him sing Psalms*, Jam. 5. 13. God Almighty is delighted with the Joy and Chearfulness of his Servants, but hates the Whines, and Groans, and Howlings of the Hypocrite. And therefore the Psalmist frequently calls upon us to *rejoice in the Lord*, and to *serve him with gladness*: and that not only by singing or vocal Musick,

But, 2dly, by the Lute and Harp, and other Instruments of Musick; for so the next words are; *Praise the Lord upon the Harp, sing to the Harp with a Psalm of Thanksgiving, with Trumpets also and Shawns*; or, as the new Translation renders it, *With the Sound of the Cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord the King*. And elsewhere; *Praise him with the stringed Instruments and Organs*, Psal. 150. 4. Where we have a sufficient Warrant, if not a Command, for instrumental Musick in the Worship of God; and may not only justify the Use of Organs, but shew the Usefulness of them, to elevate the Mind, and excite



excite our Devotion. Musick is indeed the Gift of God, and hath a mighty influence upon the Minds of Men, to chear their Hearts, to raise their Affections, and to invigorate their whole Soul. *David's* playing upon the Harp drove away the evil Spirit from *Saul*, and not only compos'd, but exhilarated his Spirits under a deep Fit of Melancholy and Distraction: the Force of Musick was so powerful, that the Devil himself could not withstand the skilful Hand of the Musician. And could Men be persuaded to lay aside their Prejudices, and with honest Minds resort to the publick Prayers of the Church, assisted with vocal and instrumental Musick, it would in a great measure chase away the evil Spirit of Faction and Division, of Envy and Detraction, of Malice and Revenge, with other diabolical Passions, that too much reign among us, to the great disturbance of Church and State.

*David* then commands us to sing the Praises of the Lord with a chearful Voice, and likewise to use the Organ and other Instruments of Musick to elevate our Mind, and exalt our Devotion: And our Church, with most of the Reformed Churches abroad, hath wisely and piously follow'd his Precept and Pattern herein, by retaining both vocal and instrumental Musick in Divine Service to this day. But,

Let any should think this an Old-Testament Precept, to continue only under the legal Dispensation, and to be inconsistent with the pure and spiritual Worship of God under the Gospel:

Let such know, that there was nothing typical or ceremonial in this Precept, to be done away at the Coming of the *Messias*, but carries a natural Reason and perpetual Obligation with it, having a like divine Institution under the Evangelical Dispensation; for the Apostle's Command for singing and making melody with Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, carries the same Sense and Obligation with *David's* singing unto the Lord a new Song, and praising him with the Organ and ten-stringed Instrument.

Beside, there is the same reason for it in the Christian, as there was in the Jewish State: for we have now the same Deadness and Dulness, the same Defects and Indispositions in Divine Service, as they had then; and therefore stand in need of the same Helps and Assistances to stir up our Affections, to quicken our Devotion, and to

inspire us with Chearfulness and Zeal in our Prayers and Thanksgivings.

Lastly, From the Manner of praising God, I pressed to the Persons and Things here call'd upon to do it: And they are all God's Creatures, who being in some measure Partakers of his Mercy and Bounty, are all in some way or other to join in setting forth his Praise. And here the Psalmist descends to some Particulars, *viz.* the Sea and Land, the Rivers and Hills, with all the Inhabitants of each; by which we are to understand all Persons, who are to pay their Duty and Homage to the great Lord and Maker of all things, but especially Man, whom he hath made Vice-Roy and Deputy-Governour under him, over all the Works of his hands.

Among these, the Psalmist here begins with the Seas, ver. 7. *Let the Sea roar, and the Fulness thereof; let the Ocean make a noise, and the Waves thereof lift up their voice to the honour of their Maker, who hath gather'd the Waters into an heap, and set them their bounds that they cannot pass.* Let the Fish that move in that watry Region shew forth his Power, especially let the great Leviathan, whom he hath made to take his Pastime therein, declare his Wonders in the Deep.

Next, *Let the round World, and all that is therein, set forth his Praise,* ver. 8. that is, the dry Land and all that walk upon it. Since the Glory of God is made known to all Lands, they ought all to join in shewing forth his Glory. Moreover,

The Floods and Rivers are call'd upon to do the same: *Let the Floods clap their hands,* ver. 9. The clapping of hands, you know, is a token of Joy, and signifies the inward Motion and good Wishes of the Heart. Again, the clapping of hands is a sign of approving or applauding any Person or Performance, and likewise of keeping of time to preserve the Harmony of Musick. In all which senses, this figurative Expression of clapping of hands is apply'd here to the Floods and Rivers, to signify their promoting the Glory of God, and their leading us up to him, as the Fountain from whence they flow. To which *the Hills* and the Mountains are to join in Consort, and to be *joyful together before the Lord.* And if all these inanimate Creatures are commanded to advance the Honour and Glory of their Maker, how much more ought Man, the Lord of all, to be

be the Herald of his Praise? Of which he should be ever mindful, for a good Reason added in the close; *For he cometh to judge the Earth, with Righteousness shall he judge the World, and the People with Equity*: meaning, that there is a time coming, when we shall all be summon'd to appear before him, and be call'd to an account how far we have promoted the Honour or Dishonour of our Creator; at which time we shall be rewarded or punish'd accordingly, and receive every Man according to his Works; they who by their Lives and Actions have advanc'd his Glory, shall then receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away; but they who have liv'd and acted to his dishonour, shall be cloth'd with endless Shame and Confusion of Face.

Thus we see the Sense of this divine and devout Hymn, which calls upon us to be ever joyful in the Lord, and at all solemn times and occasions to sing forth his Praises. And that not with the Voice or the Tongue only, but with the Mind and the Understanding, making melody in our Hearts unto God; and to make it the more sweet and harmonious, let us, where it may be, join with it Instruments of Musick, as the Organ, or the Lute and Harp, as holy David both advis'd and practis'd; for that will mightily affect and raise our Minds, and very much assist and heighten our Devotion. Yea,

This will fit and prepare us for the Happiness of Heaven, which, as the Holy Scripture declares, consists in Joy and Rejoicing in God, and in singing uncessant Hallelujahs. Whereas howling and whining lead only to the Regions of Misery below, where is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. In a word then, Let us by the Charms of Musick tune and temper our Souls for the Presence of God and the Society of his holy Angels, that we may be fit to be receiv'd into our Master's Joy, and join in consort with the Saints above, in singing his Praises to all eternity: Which God grant, &c.





## DISCOURSE LIV.

St. LUKE II, 29, 30, &amp;c.

*Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in peace, according to thy Word; for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation, which thou hast prepar'd before the face of all People, to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of thy People Israel.*

**T**HESE Words are the Song of good old Simeon, which he brake into upon the much long'd for Sight of his Saviour; and they are the first Hymn appointed to be said or sung after the Second Lesson of the Evening-Service.

'Twas receiv'd and read in all the antient Liturgies both Greek and Latin, and is still retain'd in all the Reform'd Churches as well as ours. And therefore for the clearer Explication of it, I shall observe in it the following Particulars;

*First, Old Simeon's last Wish, or departing Prayer; Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in peace, according to thy Word.*

*Secondly, The Ground or Reason moving him thereunto: For mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation.*

*Thirdly, The Preparation and Manifestation of it to the World; Which thou hast prepar'd before the face of all People.*

*Fourthly, The End and Design of it, or the Persons who were to receive the Benefit of it; and they are both Jews and Gentiles: To be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of thy People Israel. These are the several Parts of this Hymn, which must be a little descanted upon.*

I begin

and begin with the First Part of it, viz. Simeon's last Wish, or departing Prayer; Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in peace, according to thy Word. Simeon was generally reputed to be a Person of a very great Age, tho' the particular number of his Years be not recorded in Holy Scripture; but that he was a just Man and devout, that he waited for the Consolation of Israel, and that the Holy Ghost was upon him, is expressly mention'd, ver. 23. of this Chapter: for which reason he is commonly call'd by the name of good old Simeon. This good old Man had a Revelation made to him from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see Death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ; ver. 36. Which comfortable News put him upon thinking how and when this Promise would be made good; and that fill'd him with earnest Desires and longing Expectations of the fulfilling it. But while he was musing on these things, he was mov'd by the Spirit to go into the Temple, where, as divine Providence had order'd it, the Blessed Virgin with her Husband Joseph had then brought the young Child Jesus, to do for him according to the Custom of the Law; which was to present him unto the Lord in the Temple. For there was a Law from the beginning, of offering unto God, as the great Creator and Proprietor of all things, the First-born of every Creature. Suitable whereunto, we read that Abel's Offering was of the Firstlings of his Flock, Gen. 4. Afterward, upon God's delivering the First-born of Man and Beast among the Israelites from the destroying Angel, when he slew all those of the Egyptians round about them, he laid another claim to these things to be devoted to him: the First-born of Man, being a Male, was after a month old to be brought to the Temple, and there to be presented or offer'd by the Priest unto the Lord; whereby he was dedicated to his Service and Disposal.

Accordingly, this holy Mother, when her Child was a month old, went up to Jerusalem, to present him in the Temple; where being come, and admitted into the inner Court of the Congregation, she deliver'd the holy Child unto the Priest, who receiving him at her hands, most solemnly dedicated and presented him unto the Lord. While this Ceremony was performing, good old Simeon came by the Spirit into the Temple; who waiting for the Redemption of Israel, and believing by the Prophecies, that this was he by whom 'twas to be effected, took the holy

holy Child into his Arms, and being transported with the blessed Sight, with a sudden and silent Zeal brake out into this pious Hymn; *Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace.*

This good Man being full of years, and perhaps full of the Troubles and Infirmities of this life, was willing to die, and to leave this World in hopes of a better; of which, by this promis'd Messias, he had a full Assurance and Expectation. He was dead to the World before, and car'd not to stay any longer in it, than till he had receiv'd satisfaction in this Point. And when this long-wish'd-for Happiness came, he regarded nothing more here, but was ready to resign himself; his Desires were answer'd, and he was willing to depart.

But yet he was not so weary of Life, as to throw it away, and to sacrifice himself: as he waited for the Consolation of *Israel*, so would he wait till his change came, to be a Partaker of it, and would not leave the World without the leave of him who sent him into it. He submits himself to God's Will, and humbly craves for his Dismission, saying, *Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart*, &c. where he styles himself the Lord's Servant, and therefore first asks his Master's leave, and will not go without his permission. But being wean'd from and weary of the World, if he would let him, he was willing to depart. This is much like the Wish of *St. Paul*, who was in a strait, whether he should desire to live or die, *Phil. 1. 23, 24.* where he tells the *Philippians*, that tho it was more needful for them, that he should abide in the Flesh, yet for himself he desir'd to depart and to be with Christ, which was far better for him. In like manner good old *Simeon*, like an obedient Servant, here refers himself to his Master's Will, either to go or stay; but if it seem'd good to him, with his leave, he was desirous to depart, and to be with Christ, his long-expected Saviour and Redeemer.

But still he asks, *to depart in Peace*; that is, in Peace with God and the World, being unwilling to do or desire any thing that might offend either. This hath been the Wish, and should be still the Endeavour of all good Men, to live and die in Peace; that is, in perfect Charity with God and Men. Such was the pious Wish and Prayer of this good old Man, who tho willing to die, was yet desirous to depart in Peace; and like the Dove, that finding no Resting-place on the Waters, would return with the

Olive.



Olive-Branch of Peace to the Ark of Heaven. And this he desir'd, from a Promise of God made to him to that purpose, of which he minds him, saying, *According to thy Word; that is, according to the Revelation made to him,* that notwithstanding his old Age, and small distance from the Grave, *he should not see Death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.* And this will lead me,

Secondly, To the Ground and Reason of this his willingness to depart, and that was, *because his Eyes had seen his Salvation; i. e. his Saviour, the Author or Cause of his Salvation.* And this was indeed the best sight that his Eyes ever were or could be blest withal; a Sight far above that of the Triumphs of Rome, or all the Glories of the World: and it affected him accordingly; for it made him to despise Life, and all the gilded Vanities upon Earth, and to rejoice only in God his Saviour. The main, if not the only thing that made him willing to live, was the hopes of seeing this blessed Sight, which when once his Eyes had beholden, Death was then welcome to him, and his Departure hence became more desirable to him, than abiding longer in the Flesh: for his seeing his Saviour here, assur'd him of the beatifical Vision of him for ever hereafter; and his having his Redeemer in his Arms, was a Pledg of his being receiv'd for ever in the Arms of his Mercy. Then could he say with holy David, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee; my Flesh and my Heart faileth, by reason of Age and the Infirmities thereof; but God is the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever.*

'Twas the Saying of a wife Heathen, *Nisi ad altiora nati essemus, non esset opera pretium vivere:* If we were not born to higher things than this World can afford us, it were not worth the while to live. There is nothing here to invite a good Man to stay, nothing that can tempt a wise Man to take up his Abode in this World: But the sight of a Saviour, and the prospect of Heaven, which he hath obtain'd for us, is great enough to elevate our Minds, and to set us a longing to be going to it.

But here it may be said, *Simeon* indeed saw Christ in the Flesh, and that might leave some such deep Impressions upon him: but that was a Privilege peculiar to those times in which he liv'd, and is not vouchsaf'd to us; we cannot now see Christ with our bodily Eyes, as he did,

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we can know him only \* by hearsay, which is not so apt to affect, or to create such Assurance.

In answer to this, I say, that tho we cannot now see Christ in the Flesh since his Ascension up into Heaven; yet we may still behold him as clearly represented to the eye of our Faith, as ever he was to the bodily Eyes of *Simeon*: and the Evidence of Faith is as much above that of Sense, as the infallible Word of God is above our fallible Eye-sight. Hence we find the Apostles declaring, that they *walked by Faith, and not by Sight*; 2 Cor. 5. 7. the former being a certain, and the latter but an uncertain Guide: and therefore Faith is describ'd to be a confident Persuasion or Dependence upon God for the performance of his Promise, or a certain Conviction of the Truth of those things, of which we have no ocular or sensible Demonstration: *'Tis the substance of things hop'd for, and the evidence of things not seen*; Heb. 11. 1. It makes things absent and future to be present and real to us, and darts such bright Beams of Divine Light into the Soul, as make it assuredly persuaded of the Truth of invisible things, as if they were before its Eyes. And indeed it was not so much the Presence of the Object, that appear'd to the bodily sight of *Simeon*, as the Prospect of his Faith, and the Illumination of the Spirit, that thus transported him. And if our Faith be as strong as his, and our Minds as well persuaded of the Truth of his Word, and his readiness to save us, as his was, we might find and feel in us the same Affections. This would make us sit as loose to the World, and as willing to leave it as he was, and to desire as much to depart in Peace, upon the sight of our Saviour, with the eye of Faith, as he was upon the sight of him with his bodily Eyes: And that because the Salvation procur'd by him was design'd and contriv'd by him before the beginning of time, and reveal'd before the face of all People. Which will bring us to the

*Third Part of this Hymn; to wit, the preparing and manifesting of this Salvation to the World: Which thou hast prepar'd before the face of all People.* For the preparation of it, we read, that both the Birth and Death of our Saviour were by the determinate Counsel and Fore-know-

Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.

ledg



ledg of God; Acts 2. 23. *A Body hath then prepar'd for me, saith David in the Person of the Messias; which he fashion'd in the Womb of the blessed Virgin; where, as Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he likewise took part of the same.* God Almighty order'd that he should be made in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, to condemn Sin in the Flesh, that we might be made in the Likeness of God, and Partakers of his Divine Nature. And as his Birth, so his Death too was by the Will and Appointment of God from all Eternity: He it was that prepar'd for him the bitter Cup, which, in submission to the Divine Will, he was content to take off for the Health and Salvation of Mankind. Hence he is said to be the Lamb of God, that was slain before the foundation of the World; that is, in God's Decree and Determination.

And as he hath prepar'd, so hath he publish'd this Salvation before the face of all People. He hath reveal'd it to the ends of the Earth, so that all Nations may see the Salvation of God. The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation (saith the Apostle) hath appear'd unto all Men; Tit. 2. 11. This is the glad Tidings of the Gospel, which he hath order'd to be preach'd and publish'd unto all Nations, and hath by his Doctrine and Miracles made it plain and visible before the face of all People.

From whence I proceed to the last part of this Hymn, which sets forth the end and design of all this, or the Persons who are to receive the Benefit of it, in these words; *To be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of his People Israel.* The time was, when the Discovery of this Salvation was made to the Jews only, who were God's peculiar People; to whom appertain'd the Adoption, the Glory, the Covenants, the giving of the Law, the Service of God, and the Promises; whose were the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came: Rom. 9. 4, 5. These were the Darlings of his Care and Providence, who were surrounded with Light, when the Gentiles sat in Darkness, and in the Regions of the shadow of Death. In Jewry was God known, and his Name was great in Israel; at Salem was his Tabernacle, and his Dwelling in Sion: Psal. 76. 1, 2. meaning, that God was in Covenant with his People of Israel, and dwelt among them, to give them the Light of Divine Truths, when others were left to grope in black and thick Darkness. There was a Partition-  
Wall



Wall to exclude the Gentiles from the Privileges of the Temple, who were Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the World; as the Apostle describes their forlorn State. But now in Christ Jesus they that were far off, are made nigh by the Blood of his Cross; he is our Peace, who hath made both Jew and Gentile one, and hath broken down the middle Wall of Partition, that was between them: Eph. 2. 12, 13, &c.

When this Sun of Righteousness arose, he scattered his bright Beams over the face of the Earth, and made the Light of his Doctrine and Miracles to shine throughout the World; by which means the Gentiles, that sat in Darkness, had a marvellous Light sprung up unto them, being enlighten'd with the knowledge of God and Christ, and the means of their Salvation, which they happily enjoy to this day. And thus the Prophecy of good old Simeon, concerning this Child, is punctually fulfill'd, by being a Light to lighten the Gentiles: for he hath turn'd the Heathen World from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God; that is, from the Darkness of Paganism and Idolatry to the Light of the Gospel, and the glorious Privileges of Christianity. By which likewise he is become,

*The Glory of his People Israel.* It was an unspeakable Honour and Glory to that People, that the Messiah, or Son of God, would vouchsafe to receive his Birth from them, being descended from the Seed of Abraham, and from the Stock and Lineage of David, who was of the Family or House of Israel.

But this their Glory rose far higher, by his being the Redeemer of Mankind, and a publick Blessing to all Nations: That the great Light of the World should take his Rise from them, and not only shew them the way to Heaven, but lead the benighted World out of Darkness, and bring them to the Light of everlasting Life; which is an Honour far greater than the most glorious Triumphs and Trophies of the greatest Princes.

Thus I have descanted a little on the several Parts of this Song of Simeon, which may teach us many good Lessons. As,

(1.) From his readiness to depart this World upon the sight of his Saviour, we may learn to look unto Jesus, the

Author

*Author and Finisher of our Faith*, to create in us the same Indifference. The reason why most Men are so gl'd and fasten'd to this World, and so loth to depart, is from their seldom thinking of and looking up to the Glories above; which if they oftner did, they would look down with contempt on the trifling and transitory Glories here below, and be more willing to leave them.

(2.) From *Simeon's* rejoicing so much at the sight of our Saviour with his bodily Eyes, we may learn to rejoice much more at our sight of him with the eye of Faith, which may give us a far better Assurance. And if *Abraham* rejoyc'd to see the Day of Christ at a distance, in the dark Glass of Prophecy; how much more ought we to rejoice, who see him face to face, in the clearer Discoveries of the Gospel?

(3.) From God's preparing this Salvation for us before the face of all People, let us learn to prepare our selves for it, and upon such a Prospect and clear Discovery of it, to qualify our selves to be meet Partakers of it; remembering the words of the Apostle, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?*

Lastly, From the benefit which both Jew and Gentile receive from this Salvation, being a Light to the one, and a Glory to the other; let us learn to bless God for the Accomplishment and Revelation of it; especially we, who are of the Race of the Gentiles, ought to praise and magnify him for ever, for the Light we have of it at present, and for the Hopes of a future and eternal Fruition of it. Which God grant, &c.



## DISCOURSE LV.

PSAL. LXVII. throughout.

*God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and shew us the Light of his Countenance, and be merciful unto us; that thy way may be known upon Earth, and thy saving Health among all Nations, &c.*

**W**HAT good old *Simeon*, in the foregoing Hymn, wish'd for in the behalf of himself, upon the sight of his Saviour; that Holy *David*, in this Parallel Hymn, prays for in the behalf of all People, upon the Prospect of his Salvation. And as the obtaining of his Wish fill'd his Heart with Extasies of Joy, so should the answering of our Prayers fill our Mouths with Praises and Thanksgivings.

I shall not need to mention the Antiquity, the Excellency, or the Usefulness of this Divine Hymn, which was us'd in the Jewish Liturgy, and from thence transfer'd into the Liturgies of the Christian Churches.

In discoursing of it, I shall observe in it the following Particulars:

*First*, A Prayer, *God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and shew us the Light of his Countenance, and be merciful unto us.*

*Secondly*, The End and Extent of it, which is for the Good of all Mankind; *That thy way may be known upon Earth, and thy saving health among all Nations.*

*Thirdly*, The Return of Praise and Joyfulness to be made for it; *Let the People praise thee, O God; yea, let all the People praise thee:* which, for the Reasonableness and Importance of it, is twice repeated.

*Fourthly*, The Benefit or Encouragement that will accrue to us thereby; and that is, (1.) The Increase of all earthly good things, *Then shall the Earth bring forth her Increase.* And, (2.) The Blessing of God upon it, with the good effect of it; *God shall bless us, and all*



the ends of the World shall fear him. These things contain the Sum of this devout Psalm, and must be consider'd in their Order. And I begin, as the Hymn does,

*First, With the Prayer; God be merciful unto us, and bless us, &c.* Where three things are pray'd for,

1<sup>st</sup>, For Mercy; *God be merciful unto us.*

2<sup>ly</sup>, For his Blessing; *Be merciful unto us, and bless us.*

3<sup>ly</sup>, For Favour, express'd here by the Light of his Countenance; *And shew us the Light of his Countenance.* And lest any thing should intercept or hide it from us, the Petition for Mercy is doubled to prevent it; *And be merciful unto us.*

The first Petition then is for Mercy, *God be merciful unto us.* This is indeed the prime and principal thing to be ask'd for in all our Addresses unto God, and is the spring and ground-work of all other Petitions, which are all founded upon Mercy. We may not pretend to merit or deserve any thing, but must depend wholly upon the Divine Goodness and Mercy; for when we have done our best, we are but unprofitable Servants, we have done but our Duty, and many times fail and come short of that: yea, our best Works are attended with so many Defects and Imperfections, that they rather deserve Punishment than Reward; Iniquity cleaves even to our holy things, and 'tis not any Merit in them, but the pure Mercy of God to accept of them.

Now the Mercy here implor'd, consists chiefly in the pardoning of our Sins, which are the Cause of all our Miseries: And this is what all, even the best of Men, stand in need of, and are oblig'd to ask; for we have all sinn'd, and broken his Commandments, and thereby justly incur'd the Displeasure of God, and the Penalties of all his Laws: and therefore we ought daily to pray with the poor Publican, *Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner.* The proud Pharisee indeed stood upon his own Justification, and pleaded that he was not as bad, but much better than other Men, and especially than that poor Publican; and so look'd that God should justify him, as much as he did himself, for the Merits of his own Works: But the Publican, for his disclaiming all Merit, and relying wholly upon Mercy, went home to his House justify'd before the other; he was approv'd and commended for his Humility, when the other

was condemn'd for his Arrogance and Hypocrisy. We find *David*, the Man after God's own heart, often calling upon God for Mercy, and casting himself wholly upon it: *Have mercy upon me* (saith he) *after thy great Goodness, and according to the multitude of thy Mercies do away mine Offences*; Psal. 51. 1. And his Psalms every where abound with Petitions for Mercy: from whence our Church hath taught us to say daily, *God be merciful unto us*; the first Petition of this Hymn.

The second is for God's Blessing; *Be merciful unto us, and bless us*. The Blessing of God gives all the taste and relish to all his Mercies, and puts all the Sweetness and Comfort into his other Blessings, which are all sapless and insignificant without it. 'Tis by his Blessing that the Food we eat doth nourish us, and the Clothes we wear keep us warm; yea, the Air we breathe in would rather poison than preserve us without his Blessing, which we therefore daily pray for. *The Blessing of the Lord* (saith *Solomon*) *maketh rich*. 'Tis that prospers us in all our Affairs, and to that we owe all the Success and Delight in our honest Undertakings: for *tho* Paul may plant, and *Apollos* may water, yet 'tis the Blessing of God alone, that gives the Increase.

But the Blessing we here pray for, consists not so much in the Riches, Honours, and outward Advantages of this World, as in the inward Grace and Favour of God; which will make us rich in Good Works, and lead us to all the Prosperity and Happiness of the World to come. And this is more fully express'd in

The next Petition, by the Light of God's Countenance; *And shew us the Light of his Countenance*. Where we beg him to signify the Kindness of his Heart by the Smiles of his Countenance. When God is angry and displeas'd with us, he is said to frown, and to withdraw his Face from us; but when he returns in Mercy and Favour to us, he is said to smile, and to lift up the Light of his Countenance upon us. This is one of the greatest pieces of Felicity that can betide us: And if the Favour of Princes be so much courted and desir'd by us, how much more desirable is the Favour of God, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? *In his favour is Life* (saith the Psalmist) Psal. 30. 5. and elsewhere, *His Favour is better than Life*: for Life is a Burden when Heaven frowns, and is imbitter'd with Sorrow and Trouble; which cannot be avoided, when God's Blessing



ling and Favour is wanting. This is express'd here by the Light of God's Countenance; for if the Light of the Sun be pleasant, how much more delightful is the Light of God's Countenance? And therefore the Blessing that God commanded *Aaron* and his Sons to pronounce upon the Children of *Israel*, was in these words: *The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make his Face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his Countenance upon thee, and give thee peace; Numb. 6. 24, 25.* Hence the Psalmist, speaking of the Cry of the Worldlings, *Who will shew us any Good?* takes occasion to pray, *Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us, and that will put more Joy and Gladness into our Hearts, than in the time that their Corn, and Wine, and Oil increaseth; Psal. 4. 6, 7, 8.* This is the Prayer which this Hymn directs us to make: But what is the End of it? or for whom is it put up? Why, that

The next Particular will inform us, it is for the Good of all Mankind; *That thy Way may be known upon Earth, thy saving Health among all Nations.* As the Light of the Sun shines to the ends of the Earth, so we pray that the Light of God's Countenance may extend to the uttermost parts of the World, that the Sun of Righteousness may arise, and enlighten all the dark Corners of the Earth; that those who fate in the Regions of the shadow of Death, may have Life and Immortality brought to light to them by the Gospel; and so the Earth may be fill'd with the Knowledge of God, as the Waters cover the Sea.

I observ'd before, that the first Revelation of the Will of God was made to the *Jews* only: *He shew'd his Word unto Jacob* (saith the Psalmist) *his Statutes and Ordinances unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any Nation, neither have the Heathen the knowledge of his Laws; Psal. 147. 19, 20.* The Land of *Jewry* was his Garden, which he inclos'd and cultivated, when the rest of the World lay like a neglected Common. In *Jewry* was God known, when other places were over-run with Ignorance and Barbarism.

Now *David* foreseeing the Conversion of the *Gentiles*, and that Salvation should be extended to them by the coming of the *Messias*, here prays God to lift up the Light of his Countenance, and to hasten that happy time, by making *his way known upon Earth, and his saving Health*



*among all Nations.* And this he was encourag'd to ask, from the Promise that God made to his Son, of *giving him the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for his Possession*; Psal. 2. 8. meaning, that he should take them within the Pales of the Church, and unite both *Jew and Gentile* into one Flock, under the great Shepherd and Bishop of their Souls.

From the Prospect of this Salvation of Mankind, the Psalmist here breaks out into a Song of Praise and Thanksgiving in the next words:

*Let the People praise thee, O God; yea, let all the People praise thee*: that is, Let the People give unto the Lord the Glory due unto his Name; and because they are all Partakers of his Blessing, let all the People praise him.

Praise is a Tribute to be paid for every Mercy we receive; but publick and general Blessings require greater and more universal Joy. And because our single and particular Praises fall far short of the Honour due unto his Name, we therefore summon in all People to join and bear a part with us in our Songs of Thanksgiving; which it behoves them all to do, since God hath lifted up the Light of his Countenance upon them, and made it shine to all Nations.

If the Rising of the Sun be pleasant and reviving, and bids us look up and rejoice in the great Father of Lights, who gives it all its Light and Motion; how much more cheering is the Light of God's Countenance, and the Light of the Gospel, which guide us in our way to Heaven, and bring us to the Light of everlasting Life? We read of the Inhabitants of some of the Northern Regions, who wanting the Light of the Sun for some months, during which time they are benighted in Shades and Darkness, were wont, upon the Rising and Return of the Sun, to meet it with great Joy and Acclamation; crying, ἰδοὺ ὁ ἥλιος, *Behold the Sun!* and χαῖρε φῶς, *Welcome thou Light, the Beauty and Glory of the Universe.* But how much more ought we to rejoice for the Coming of the Sun of Righteousness, which hath risen to all Nations with healing in its wings? Sure no Joy can be too great to welcome this Light into the World, which hath scatter'd his bright Beams over the face of the Earth, and made all Nations see the Salvation of God. *O let the Nations therefore rejoice and be glad* (saith the Psalmist in the next Verse)   
for

for he shall judg the Folk righteously, and govern the Nations upon earth. He who hath thus enlighten'd the World, will judg it with Right and Equity; he will lay aside his Rod of Iron, with which he bruise the Enemies and Opposers of his Kingdom, and will rule his Church with his golden Scepter; that is, with Candour and Clemency: *A Scepter of Righteousness* (saith the Psalmist) *is the Scepter of thy Kingdom.* All the Dealings and Dispensations of his Providence will be not only just, but gracious; he will judg us as a Father and a Friend, not as an Enemy or a Tyrant. But still all the Nations upon earth deliver'd by him must be subject to this righteous Judg, and all People must bow before this glorious King; he still governs them by his Laws, and they must be all obedient to them; for he is a Judg as well to punish the Wicked, as to reward the Righteous.

This the Psalmist here mentions as a matter of great Joy, and therefore calls upon them again to renew their Praises and Thanksgivings; saying, *ver. 5. Let the People praise thee, O God, let all the People praise thee. Tell it out among the Heathen* (saith David) *that the Lord is King, and that he shall judg the People righteously.* And from thence calls upon the Heavens to rejoice, and the Earth to be glad thereof; Psal. 96. 10.

But the Psalmist concludes this Hymn with another and greater Encouragement to praise and rejoice in God; and that is taken from the Benefit both temporal and spiritual, that will accrue from it.

The temporal Benefit that accrues from it consists in the Increase of earthly good things, with the Blessing of God upon them. This is express'd in these words, *Then shall the Earth bring forth her Increase, and God, even our own God, shall give us his Blessing.* Where God Almighty promises to multiply all earthly Blessings, and to supply all the bodily Wants of them that praise and rejoice in him: And to that end he will crown the Year with his Goodness, and make the Clouds drop Fatness. He will fill their Folds with Sheep, their Garners with all manner of Store, and their Fields shall stand so thick with Corn, as to laugh and sing. And because all these things, without God's Blessing upon them, can yield no Comfort or Satisfaction, 'tis added, *God, even our own God, shall give us his Blessing:* that is, God who is now the God of the Gentiles as well

as the *Jews*, and so may be stil'd *our own God* in Covenant with us, shall add his Blessing to all that we enjoy; which alone puts all the Sap and Sweetness into it. He shall feed us with the Flower of Wheat, and bless our *Virtuals* with Increase. In a word, he will give us to reap the Fruits of the Earth, to eat the Fruits of our Labour, and to find Joy and Comfort in both.

These are the temporal Blessings here promis'd to God's People, and in these mainly consisted the Promises of the Old Testament: for the *Israelites* were encourag'd to their Obedience with the hopes of arriving to the Land of *Canaan*, where instead of the Garlick and Onions of *Egypt*, and the coarser Diet of the Wilderness, they should be fed with Milk and Honey, and all the Plenty of that promis'd Land.

But these were but Emblems and Shadows of better things to come; for *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, and the Wilderness an Emblem of this World, which we must pass thro, before we can arrive at the Heavenly *Canaan*.

To which end, the Close of this Psalm tells us, that God shall bless us with more spiritual and heavenly Blessings in Christ Jesus, and that all the Ends of the World shall fear him: meaning, that God will give Grace and Glory, and will with-hold no good thing from them that lead a godly Life; and this his Bounty and Goodness shall invite all Nations into his Service, and engage all the Ends of the Earth to love and fear so good a Master.

Thus I have unfolded to you the Sense of this divine Hymn; which teaches us,

1st, To pray unto God, in the first place, to be merciful unto us, in the Forgiveness of our Sins; next, to bless and prosper us in all our Affairs; and above all, to shew us the Light of his Countenance, and the Comfort of his Holy Spirit, which far exceeds all earthly or temporal Blessings.

2dly, We are taught here to praise God, and to rejoice in him; first, for his general Mercy to all Mankind, in making his way known upon Earth, and his saving Health unto all Nations. For which let us not only praise God our selves, but endeavour and call upon all others to do the same; saying with the devout Psalmist, Let the People praise thee, O God; yea, let all the People praise thee, And



And that not only for his converting all Nations, and shewing his saving Health unto them; but for his righteous judging, and gracious governing of them, without which they would fall into all kinds of Misery and Confusion. Upon which account likewise we should, as the Psalmist does, repeat this Call; *Let the People praise thee, O God, let all the People praise thee*; which is the Burden of this Song.

Lastly, Let us thank God for the temporal and spiritual Blessings, with which he is pleased to crown and reward this Duty. Tho' the Duty carry its own Reward with it, for *a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful*; yet he vouchsafes to reward the Performance of it with fruitful Seasons, and a comfortable Enjoyment of all the Fruits of the Earth: the doing whereof will engage him to multiply and increase upon us these worldly Blessings, and at last to crown them with his heavenly and everlasting Favours.

After these Hymns, follow the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, with the Versicles that attend them; which being explain'd in the Morning-Service, I shall proceed next to the two Collects peculiar to Evening-Prayer.



## DISCOURSE LVI.

St. JAMES I. 17.

*Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness nor shadow of turning.*

**H**AVING explain'd the Hymns, I come now to the two Collects, which are the only things, wherein the Evening-Service differs from the Morning. Of the first of these I shall treat at this time, from these words of St. James; *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift, (and among them, the Gift or Blessing of Peace here desir'd) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights: which is farther prov'd and enlarg'd upon in this Evening-Collect; wherein I shall observe to you,*

*First, The Person to whom this Prayer is directed; and that is God, from whom all holy Desires, all good Counsels, and all just Works do proceed.*

*Secondly, The particular Gift or Blessing ask'd of him; and that is, Give unto thy Servants that Peace which the World cannot give.*

*Thirdly, The Ends we propose in asking it; and they are three: (1.) That our Hearts may be set to obey his Commandments. (2.) That by him we may be defended from the Fear of our Enemies. And, (3.) That we may pass our time in Rest and Quietness.*

All which are things worthy to be ask'd of him, who is alone able to give them. I begin then, as the Prayer doth,

*First, With the Person to whom it is directed; and that is God, from whom all holy Desires, all good Counsels, and all just Works do proceed. This is the same in effect with*

with what is here affirm'd by St. James; *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.* Where every good and perfect Gift in the Text is reduc'd to three Heads in the Collect, to wit, *holy Desires, good Counsels, and just Works*; all which are said in it to proceed from God, and to spring from the Fountain of all Light and Knowledg. But to speak a little more particularly to each of them: And,

1st, By holy Desires here, are meant the first Motions or Stirrings of the Soul after any Good; the first bubbling up of the Affections in good Wishes, which after flow and improve into greater Longings; like that of David, *As the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God: my Soul is a-thirst for God; O when shall I come and appear in the presence of God!* And elsewhere he breathes out his Soul in such words as these: *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee*; Psal. 42. 1, 2. and Psal. 73. 24.

Now these holy Desires and pious Breathings of the Soul proceed only from God, and are wrought in us by his holy Spirit. They come not from our own corrupt Hearts; for they have a natural Averseness and Enmity to all that is good, and a strong Propensity and Proneness to that which is evil: *The Flesh lusteth unto Evil, and the Thoughts of the Heart are only evil, and that continually.* So that 'tis God alone, who turneth the Rivers of Waters; can turn the Stream of our Desires and Affections towards him, and incline them unto Good. 'Tis he that kindles the Sparks of holy Desires in the Breast, which after improve into more ardent Flames of Love and Longings after him.

2dly, By good Counsels here, we are to understand those deliberate Acts of the Mind, whereby it considers and judges aright of things, and from thence cometh to pious Purposes and Resolutions about them. Of this kind was that of Joshua, who upon serious thoughts and deliberation bid the Israelites *chuse whom they would serve, but for himself and Family he would serve the Lord*; Josh. 24. 15. And such was that of David; *I consider'd my ways, and so turn'd my feet unto thy Testimonies*; Psal. 119.

Now these good Counsels and pious Resolutions proceed from none but God, who is the All-wise and Almighty Counsellor, who leads into all, and nothing but Truth. They



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They come not from the World, for that is full of evil Counsel and bad Examples, which mislead many into the ways of Sin and Error. *David* speaks of the Counsel of the Ungodly, *Psal.* 1. and of some that took counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed, *Psal.* 2. and of many others, who did after evil Counsel. Such evil Counsel cometh from the Devil, the Author and Promoter of all Evil; it cometh not from above, from the Father of Lights, but from below, from the Fiends of Darkness, where it is hatch'd, and whither it tends: and therefore *St. James* styles it, *earthly, sensual, devilish*, *Chap.* 3. 15.

But for all good Counsel that directs in the way to Heaven and Happiness, that is from God, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. It comes not from our own Hearts, for they are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know them? *Jer.* 17. 9. Out of the Heart (saith our Saviour) proceed evil Thoughts: and sure evil Thoughts can never produce good Counsel; no, that can proceed from God only, who is the Fountain of all Good: which made the Psalmist say to him, *Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel, and after that receive me to Glory*; *Psal.* 73. 24.

3dly, By just Works are meant all such fair and vertuous Actions as are agreeable to the Rules of Right and Justice, and are done in conformity to divine and human Laws; such as Honesty in all our Dealings, Fidelity in all our Promises, Truth and Equity in all our Bargains and Contracts. Such just Works proceed also from God, who is the just and righteous Judge of all the World. Of our selves we are not sufficient to think a good Thought, or to speak a good Word, and much less to do a good Action; but all our Sufficiency is of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do, and by his holy Spirit worketh all our good Works in us and for us. The Prophet *Micah* tells us, that God Almighty sheweth as well as requireth us, to do justly, *Mic.* 6. 8. And the Apostle, that the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, teaches us to live righteously, as well as soberly and godly in this present World; *Tit.* 2. 12, &c. Satan and the World teach Men to walk in Craftiness and Deceit, to out-wit and over-reach their Neighbour; and the Flesh prompts to all Unrighteousness, to which a corrupt Heart is but too ready to consent, and join issue. But 'tis the Grace of God that alone re-  
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strains us from doing evil, and both inclines and enables us to do well.

Thus we see, that every good Gift and every perfect Gift is from above; or, as the Church words it, all holy Desires, and all good Counsels, and all just Works intirely proceed from God's Grace and Goodness. "For he first excites our Affections to desire, then engages the Will to chuse, and after enables our Hands to perform that which is good; insomuch (as one hath observ'd on these words) there are no holy Thoughts in our Minds, no holy Purposes in our Hearts, nor any righteous Actions in our Lives, but what are in, and by, and thro him." From whence I proceed,

*Secondly,* To the particular Gift or Blessing here desir'd of him; and that is, *Give unto thy Servants that Peace which the World cannot give.* Where we acknowledg Peace to be the Gift of God, and therefore desire him to give it: and indeed God himself hath told us so much; for *I create the Fruit of the Lips, Peace* (saith he) *Peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, and I will heal them*; Isa. 57. 19. meaning, that he makes Peace for us both abroad and at home. We pray'd for Peace before, in the Morning-Collect, and beg'd it of him who is the Author of Peace, and Lover of Concord; and here we renew our Petition for Peace, and ask it again in our Evening-Service. Indeed, Peace is so great and excellent a Blessing, that we cannot ask it too often; for it contains in it all other Blessings, and gives the relish to, and enjoyment of them all.

But some distinguish here of a twofold Peace, the one outward, with the World and all Mankind; and this is the Peace pray'd for in the Morning-Service, as the best Preservative from the Injuries and evil Designs of the Day; the other inward, with our own Mind and Conscience; and this is the Peace pray'd for in this Evening-Prayer, as the best Opiate against the Troubles and Terrors of the Night: for this will keep the Mind easy and undisturb'd within, amidst all the Tumults and Concussions without; and so render our Rest the more sweet and comfortable to us.

And this is one of those good and perfect Gifts that is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights; 'tis (as one exprestes it) that Peace of God which only cometh.



cometh from the God of Peace. The Prayer stiles it, *a Peace which the World cannot give.* The World can give Disquiet and Trouble, which our Saviour wills his Disciples to expect and prepare for; *In the World ye shall have Tribulation*: but it can give no lasting Peace or Tranquillity of Mind; that proceeds from a Sense of the Love and Favour of God, and the Testimony of a good Conscience. 'Tis in vain to seek for Peace from any earthly things, which are the occasions of all our Discontent: this is to *seek the Living among the Dead*, and we may as well expect to *gather Grapes from Thorns, or Figs from Thistles*, as hope to reap any inward Comfort from these outward worldly things, which are attended with little else than Cares and Crosses. Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures, which are the best things the World can shew, afford no ease or satisfaction at all to the Soul; and therefore the Rich Man in the Gospel was call'd a Fool, for saying to his Soul, *Soul take thine ease, thou hast Goods laid up for many Years.* Barns full of Corn, and Bags full of Coin, are neither suited to the Nature nor Necessities of the Soul; for the Soul is a spiritual Substance like unto God, whereas these things are all drossy and carnal. The Wants of the Soul too are spiritual, such as the Pardon of Sin, the Assistance of divine Grace, the Joys and Comforts of the Holy Ghost; which Wants cannot be supply'd by all or any of these sensual and carnal things. Beside, the best things of this World bear no proportion with the Dignity and Duration of the Soul; for the Soul is a Ray of the Divinity, the Offspring of Heaven, and ally'd to the holy Angels, and so can receive no Satisfaction from the Dross and Dung of this World. Again, the Soul is immortal, and will live for ever, and so cannot be content with any of this perishing and transitory Food. And the Folly of the Rich Man was, his thinking that an immortal Soul could find ease from Goods laid up for many Years, which are nothing to Eternity; especially when his lasted not for Years or Days, but were taken from him the same night. And so no Peace or Satisfaction can be expected from these things.

But the Peace which the World cannot give, God can give unto his Servants: he is all-sufficient and everlasting, and so can answer all the Wants and Desires of the Soul, and fill up all its Cravings; he is the Center of Rest and Peace, the Strength of our Hearts, and our Portion  
for



for ever: and therefore the Church here fitly directs us to go to him for that Rest and Tranquillity of Mind, which is no where else to be had; and to encourage us, our Saviour calls all that are weary and heavy-laden to come to him, and he will give rest unto their Souls: for he hath made our peace with God, and by his Merits and Intercession hath procur'd it for us.

But what Ends are we to propose in putting up this Petition? Why, our Collect mentions three.

(1.) *That our Hearts may be set to obey God's Commandments.* Where the first and principal End of our asking Peace, is to promote Holiness, and to fix us in Obedience to the divine Laws; from which, all disturbance from without or within doth mightily hinder and divert us. We cannot obey God's Commandments, whilst we are under the command of our Lusts, and are Vassals to vile Affections: these must be subdu'd, and the inward Commotions of the Soul appeas'd, before we can be fix'd in our Duty to God, or our Hearts be set to obey his Commandments. This Disposition, we find, was wrought by it in King David; *My Heart is fix'd, O God, (saith he) my Heart is fix'd; I will sing and give Praise.* And elsewhere, *I am minded and stedfastly purposed to keep thy Commandments.* Accordingly we are taught here to pray for Peace, as a means to attain to Righteousness; for Peace promotes Righteousness, and Righteousness promotes Peace: they mutually help and advance each other; for *the Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace, Jam. 3. 18.* and *the Effect of Righteousness is Quietness and Assurance for ever, Isa. 32. 17.* And *great Peace have they that keep thy Law (saith holy David) and nothing shall offend them; Psal. 112.*

(2.) Another End of desiring Peace, is Safety; *That we may be defended from the Fear of our Enemies.* This was pray'd for in the Collect for Peace in the Morning-Service; *That we may be defended in all Assaults of our Enemies, and deliver'd from the Fear and Power of any Adversaries.* And indeed this is a Petition of that importance, that it ought to be frequently minded and put up: For since the Malice of Enemies continually threatens us with their Assaults, and is daily watching for Opportunities to surprize us, it concerns us to seek daily to be guarded against them: which we cannot better do, than by calling in the

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Aid and Assistance of Heaven, and imploring the watchful Eye and Hand of Providence to defend us from them.

Now nothing can better engage God Almighty to do this for us, than, as we are here taught, to pray to him every day for Peace and Safety; which two things are so nearly ally'd, that they are often coupled together: for Peace is the Cause of Safety, and Safety is the Effect of Peace.

A peaceable Man hath ordinarily but few Enemies to fear; for there are not many, who can be so vilely base and wicked, as to injure an innocent or inoffensive Person: Which made the Apostle ask the question, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good?* But if any such Monsters of Wickedness should arise, God Almighty's Providence will be a sufficient guard against all their evil Designs; for *he makes all things to work together for good to them that love God.*

This is what we here pray for, to wit, to be so fortify'd with Innocence and a good Conscience, as not to fear the Power or Malice of any Adversaries. And indeed if all things are quiet within, we need not be dismay'd at any Opposition without, but rely upon him, who hath promis'd to deliver us out of all.

Now the Enemies we here pray to be defended from the fear of, are partly our ghostly Enemies, the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, who are daily assaulting us with their Temptations; and partly our temporal Enemies, who seek to do us evil in Body, Goods, or Name; from all which we pray God to preserve and defend us.

(3.) The last End here mention'd of our praying for Peace, is, *That we may pass our time in Rest and Quietness.* This is one of the greatest Blessings we can enjoy on this side the Grave, to live in Rest, and to die in Peace, to pass away our days here on earth in Health, Ease and Comfort, without any molestation from within or without. Time in its natural course passes away alike to all, and 'tis not in the power of the wisest or greatest Persons, either to slacken or quicken its Motion: for *Time and Tide, we say, stays for no body.*

But the manner of spending time, and the Circumstances of Life, are very various: Some spend their time in gratifying their Lusts and Luxury, which unavoidably bring on Troubles, Sickneses, and Diseases; and these must make their Life uneasy. Others pass their days in  

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Idleness,

Idleness, Gaming, and other Vanities and Follies of human Life, which necessarily draw on many Miseries, as Poverty, Infamy, and Disgrace, Bonds and Imprisonment, with many other Calamities, that render Life rather a Burden than a Blessing to them. Others again spend their time in Diligence in their Calling, and in all the Acts of Religion and Vertue; and these commonly escape most of the Troubles and Miseries of human Life, and ordinarily pass their time in Rest and Quietness.

And this is what we here desire, and should earnestly endeavour for; *That we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty*: which the Apostle makes the Sum of all earthly Felicity. To which end, we must be frequent in our Prayers, just in our Dealings, and true and faithful in all our Actions.

Again, We must (as the Apostle directs) *study to be quiet*, by minding our own Business, and not meddling too much in the Affairs of others, which is apt to create disquiet both to our selves and them.

Thus I have explain'd the principal Heads of this Collect, which teach us,

1<sup>st</sup>, To own God as the Author of every good and perfect Gift; and particularly, that all our holy Desires, good Counsels, and just Works proceed from him.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Let us pray for that Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, which the World cannot give us; that our Hearts may be set to obey his Commandments, and being defended from the Fear of all our Enemies, may pass our time in Rest and Quietness, till we come to eternal Rest and Quietness in Heaven.





## DISCOURSE LVII.

PSALM LV. 17.

*In the Evening, Morning, and at Noon-day, will I pray, and cry aloud : or, as it is in the old Translation, And that instantly, and he shall hear my Voice.*

I Discours'd the last time of the first Collect in the Evening-Service, which taught us to acknowledg God to be the Author of all our Gifts, Graces, and good Works ; and particularly of the great Blessing of Peace, both outward with the World, and inward with our own Conscience : And from thence were directed to ask that Peace of him, which the World could not give us, to wit, the internal Peace and Tranquillity of our own Minds ; to the end, that our Hearts may be fix'd in obedience to God's Laws, and that we may pass our Lives in Rest and Quietness thro all the Stages of this World.

I come now to the second Collect of our Evening-Prayer, of which I shall discourse from these words of the Psalmist ; *In the Evening, Morning, and at Noon-day, will I pray, and that instantly ; and he shall hear my Voice.*

Where we may observe,

*First*, The proper Times and Seasons of daily Prayer ; and they are *the Evening, the Morning, and at Noon-day.*

*Secondly*, We have David's pious Resolution of observing them ; at those times (saith he) *I will pray, and that instantly.*

*Thirdly*, We have the Encouragement he had to do so, from an Assurance of being heard ; *And he shall hear my Voice.*

I shall speak something briefly to each of these, and then come to the Evening-Prayer prescrib'd in our Liturgy.

And,

And, First, We have here the stated Times and Seasons of daily Prayer; and they are, as *David* here recites them, the *Evening, Morning, and Noon-day*. Where the Psalmist computes the Day from the Evening, according to the account given by *Moses* of the Beginning of Time, Gen. 1. *The Evening and the Morning were the first Day*; and so of the rest. But however that be, most certain it is, that some set stated Times were appointed from the Beginning, for the daily Worship and Service of God. And that those we now observe, were appointed Seasons for that purpose, is evident by the Testimony of Scripture, and the Practice both of the Jewish and Christian Church ever since.

The Jews were commanded by God himself, to offer up two Lambs of a year old, day by day continually; the one in the Morning, and the other in the Evening, Exod. 29. 38. and this was call'd, the daily Sacrifice. And this was order'd to be a continual Burnt-Offering throughout their Generations, as we read in that Chapter. In obedience to this and other Precepts, holy *David* offer'd up his Sacrifice of Prayer and Praise every Morning and Evening; adding to it the Noon-day, perhaps to consecrate the Provision he then took for his Sustainance. And for these stated times of Devotion, we have here,

Secondly, *David's* pious Resolution of observing them; *In the Evening, Morning, and at Noon-day, will I pray, (saith he) and that instantly: For it is a good thing to shew forth his Loving-kindness in the Morning, and his Faithfulness every Night; Psal. 92. 2.* This he would not omit upon any occasion, nor could the greatest Affairs of a Kingdom keep him from paying his Homage to his Maker at those seasons. *Every day (saith he) will I give thanks unto the Lord, and praise him more and more.* The same we read of *Daniel*, that he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and pray'd and gave thanks unto his God; Dan. 6. 10. Which pious Practice hath been observ'd by good Men ever since. In compliance with this religious Custom, our Church hath appointed a Morning and Evening-Service, to be daily used and perform'd by all its Members. Because we every day renew our Lives by awaking out of Sleep, the Image of Death, therefore we renew our Praises and Thanksgivings every Morning, as was shew'd more at large

in the Morning-Collect. And because every night we fall again by Sleep into the Arms of Death, being then as incapable of Thought and Action, as if we were actually dead, therefore we pray every Evening for God's watchful Care and Providence over us, as we shall see by and by : To both which we are encourag'd by the

*Third thing in the Text, which is an Assurance of being heard ; And he shall hear my Voice.* God hath stil'd himself a *God hearing Prayers*, which he did in opposition to the Idol Gods of the Heathens, who had Eyes and saw not, and Ears and heard not ; whereas we serve the living God, whose Ears are ever open to the reasonable Requests of his People : *His Eyes (saith the Psalmist) are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open to their Calls.* Yea, himself hath bid us to *call upon him in all times of need, and he will hear us*, Psal. 50. And what greater Encouragement can we have to apply to him both Night and Day ? And this will lead me to consider,

The Evening-Collect prepar'd by the Church for our Evening-Prayer ; and that is in these few good words :

*Lighten our Darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord, and by thy great Mercy defend us from all Perils and Dangers of this Night, for the Love of thy only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Where we have two Petitions to be offer'd up to God every Night ; the one, to *lighten our Darkness*, the other, to *defend us from the Perils and Dangers of the Night* : together with the Motives or Inducements used in asking them ; and they are, not any Merits of our own, but the Mercy of God, and the Love of our Lord Jesus Christ : of which particularly.

I begin with the first Petition, viz. *Lighten our Darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord.* The Petition is taken from those words of David in Psal. 18. 28. *Thou wilt light my Candle, the Lord my God will enlighten my Darkness ;* or, as the old Translation hath it, *will make my Darkness to be Light.* The words in both Translations are figurative and metaphorical, and have something of Darkness and Obscurity in them ; and therefore require a little Explication. And the first Expression here alluded to, is, *Thou, O God, wilt light my Candle* : where by Candle we must not understand the common and ordinary Candle used in our own Houses ; for that would be too trivial a Request to be made



made to God Almighty, to light a Candle for us, to shew us the way to bed. But by Candle here we are to understand the Mind or Understanding of Man, which *Solomon* stiles the Candle of the Lord, *Prov. 20. 27.* meaning, that it is of his setting up within us; and that the Light it gives, tho' but faint and glimmering, is yet from the Lord: which Faintness proceeded not from the Lord, who originally endow'd it with clear and piercing Faculties, able to discover and discern between Good and Evil; but from the Fall of our first Parents, which crack'd our Intellectuals, and made this Candle of the Lord burn but dimly in us ever since.

Now *David's* mentioning of God's lighting his Candle, was meant of his repairing that Light within him by his Grace, which was in a great measure blown out and extinguish'd by his Sin, and restoring it to its primitive Brightness and Lustre.

Then, secondly, that other Expression of enlightening his Darkness, is much to the same purpose; for Darkness here is not meant of that natural Darkness, that is occasion'd by the absence of the Sun and Moon, the two great Luminaries of Heaven: For to desire God to enlighten that Darkness, would be to ask him to alter the Course of Nature, to turn Night into Day, and to confound Light with Darkness; which would be to reconcile Contraries, and to make Contradictions agree, both which are known to be impossible. For *what Concord* (saith the Apostle) *hath Light with Darkness? or what Fellowship hath God with Belial?* the Father of Lights with the Fiend of Darkness? But by Darkness here is meant the spiritual Darkness of Ignorance and Blindness of Mind, and by Light the spiritual Light of Knowledge and good Understanding. For so Light and Darkness are often taken in Holy Scripture; and so the Sense of this Petition of enlightening our Darkness, is to remove all Ignorance and Blindness of Mind, all Hardness of Heart and Contempt of God's Word, by which the Soul is clouded and darken'd; and to scatter the bright Beams of Wisdom and Knowledge into the Mind, such as may dispel all the Mists of Error and Ignorance, and let in a clear and convincing Light upon the Soul.

This is express'd in the Acts of the Apostles, by opening the Eyes of the Understanding, and turning us from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, Acts

26. 18. And this is a Petition very fit to be put up every Evening, upon the approaching Darknes and Shadows of the Night, that the Eyes of our Mind may be open, to look up unto God, when our bodily Eyes are shut, and can see nothing about us; and that the Soul may be furnish'd with inward Light, when the Body is surrounded with outward Darknes.

But there is another Sense of these Words very applicable to the Occasion of them; for Light is in Scripture often taken for Joy and Gladness, and Darknes is set to signify Sorrow and Heaviness: *Light is sown for the Righteous* (saith the Psalmist) *and joyful Gladness for the true in Heart*; whereas the Wicked are said to *sit in Darknes and in the Shadow of Death*: that is, good Men enjoy Comfort and Delight in the *Light of his Countenance*, which is sometimes express'd by the *Joy of God's Countenance*, when Sinners endure the Frowns and Discomfort of his Displeasure. *Heaviness endureth for a Night* (saith Holy David) *but Joy cometh in the Morning*. The Darknes of the Night is in it self very disconsolate, and suggests many Fears, whereas the Light of the Day is very pleasant, and affords many delightfom Diversions; so that the Petition here, to *lighten our Darknes*, or to *make our Darknes to be Light*, may in this sense be a Request made to God Almighty, to keep us free from the Fears of the Night, and to bring us safe to the Comforts of the next Day; which is a very fit and seasonable Request to be made every Night. And this will lead me to the

Second Petition of this Evening Collect, which is to be *defended from all the Perils and Dangers of the ensuing Night*. The Perils and Dangers of the Night are many and great, both to Soul and Body. The Soul is often assaulted with evil Thoughts and Imaginations of all kinds; sometimes straining upon Lust and Lasciviousness, which breed lewd and wanton Thoughts; sometimes bordering upon Pride and Ambition, which beget many vain aspiring Thoughts; sometimes touching upon Hatred and Revenge, which occasion many black, malicious, and revengeful Thoughts; and sometimes tending to Sedition and Rebellion, which hatch and harbour many treasonable and rebellious Imaginations: all which are occasion'd and shelter'd under the Covert of Night and Darknes. Satan is then very



very busy with us, and suggests many wild Fears and Fancies, to scare us with Dreams, and terrify us with Visions. The World then presents to the Eye of the Mind its Pomps and Shows, and glittering Vanities, on purpose to allure and inveigle us; and our own corrupt Hearts are not wanting to ply us with all manner of Temptations: which vain Imaginations gain the more Strength from the Silence and Solitude of the Night.

But beside these spiritual Perils, there are likewise some bodily Fears and Dangers that attend the Night, and are apt to seize us in Darkness. The Thief cometh in the Night, and takes the advantage of Darkness to surprize us, when we are buried in Sleep, and dream of no such thing.

Again, All bodily Distempers commonly grow worse in the Night, and occasion the passing of many wearisome and restless Hours.

Now against these and all other Perils and Dangers of the Night, we here beseech God to defend us, from which nothing without his watchful Care and Providence can be a sufficient Protection. *I will lay me down in Peace (saith Holy David) and take my Rest, for thou Lord only makest me to dwell in Safety; Psal. 4. ult.*

And therefore we beg here, *The Keeper of Israel who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth*, to keep us both sleeping and waking, to defend us under the Shadow of his Wings, and to keep us safe under his Feathers. *Who is under the Defence of the most High (saith David) shall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty: He shall not be afraid of any Terror by Night, nor of the Arrow that flieth by Day, nor for the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness, nor the Destruction that wasteth at Noon-day. He shall be preserved from all Evil, for his Truth and Faithfulness shall be his Shield and Buckler; Psal. 91. 1, &c.* Our Church therefore fitly teaches us, to pray to God every Night, to guard us from the Dangers and Disturbances incident to that State of Forgetfulness, and to give us a Resurrection in Health and Safety the next Morning. And this we beg, as we do all other Favours only, for Christ's sake: which leads me,

Thirdly, To the Motives or Inducements used in asking these things; and they are the *Mercy of God*, and the *Love of our Lord Jesus Christ*.



For the 1st, 'tis by thy great Mercy defend us; 'tis not for any Merits of ours, for we deserve not a minute's Protection at God's hands, but rather the quite contrary. Our Sins might justly provoke him to turn our Beds into our Graves, and to cast us into such a deep Sleep, never to awake more; but we are taught to acknowledg it to be of God's Mercy and Goodness that we breathe in the common Air: And because his Compassions fail not, therefore alone it is that we are not consumed; which made David pray to God of his Mercy to lighten his Eyes, that he slept not in Death; Psal. 13. 3. And our Church wills us to say, by thy great Mercy defend us from all the Perils and Dangers of this Night.

And that too for the Love of thy only Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. The Love of Christ is the principal Motive of all our Mercies: And 'tis for the Love that God beareth to his Son, that we here beg his Protection. God the Father loveth his dearly beloved and only begotten Son; and because this Son of his Love, and Darling of his Affections, hath loved us, and given himself for us, therefore the Father loveth us in and for him; tho we have nothing lovely of our selves to draw or invite his Affections: but Christ his Son hath united our human Nature to his divine Nature, and thereby render'd it in some measure alike, and so lovely to him. And 'tis upon this account that we are embolden'd to ask any Mercy and Favour of him, and particularly his watchful Care and Preservation of us every Night, from all the Evils and Dangers we are then expos'd to.

And now having explain'd to you this Evening-Collect, let me advise you seriously to consider and heartily mind the Sense of it, whensoever you offer it up your selves, or hear it repeated by others; that, as in the Morning-Collect you were directed to begin every Day, with imploring a Blessing upon the Affairs of each Day; so in the Evening you may close up all the Business of it with Thanksgiving and Prayer, and wind up all your Cares with true Devotion: calling your selves to an account every Evening for the Actions of the Day past, and wherein soever you have offended, to bewail it before God with hearty Repentance, and firm Resolutions of amending it; not suffering your Eyes to sleep, nor your Eye-lids to slumber, nor the Temples

ples of your Head to take any Rest, till you have made your Peace with God and your own Conscience: which will be a constant Preparation for your last Hour, and make it easy and welcome whenever it comes. Particularly, let us pray to God to *lighten our Darkeness*, by keeping the Eyes of our Mind open, and fixing them upon him who is the Father of Lights, and filling up the waking Hours of the Night with Meditations upon God and another Life; which will make the disconsolate Darkeness of it comfortable and delightful to us. In a word, let us beseech God to keep us safe from the Dangers of the Night both ghostly and bodily, to refresh our weary'd Limbs with moderate Rest and Sleep, and to raise us up the next Morning more abundantly fitted for his Service, for the Love of Jesus Christ, &c.



## DISCOURSE LVIII.

ST. MARK XVI. 16.

*He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

**H**AVING finish'd the Discourses on the Morning and Evening-Prayer, prescrib'd in the publick Liturgy of our Church; the next thing that follows in it, is the Creed of St. *Athanasius*; which being order'd to be read on many of the High Festivals of the Year instead of the Apostles Creed, and thereby made sometimes a part of Morning-Prayer, is fitly subjoin'd to it, and therefore comes fitly to be discours'd of after it.

That *Athanasius* was the Author of this Creed, tho question'd by some, is yet very evident, being found extant in his Works, and from thence quoted by many antient Fathers and Councils; so that no just doubt can be made either of its Antiquity or Authority, being held in high Honour and Estimation in the Christian Church ever since its first Composition.

The End of composing it was to preserve and explain the Faith in the Holy Trinity, against the Heresy of *Arius*, who deny'd the Divinity of Christ; of *Sabellius*, who confounded the three Persons; of *Macedonius*, who deny'd the Divinity of the Holy Ghost; with other Hereticks, who call'd in question other Articles of the Christian Faith, and thereby shak'd and subverted the Faith of many.

Now because this Creed begins with these words, *Who-so-ever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith; which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly*: And because it ends with these, *This is the Catholick Faith, which except a Man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved*; both which being thought by some too hard and severe Sayings, I have chosen to discourse of it from these Words of our Saviour, wherein he affirms the same; *He that*



that believeth and is baptiz'd, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. Where we have,

First, The necessary Conditions of Life and Salvation, which are Faith and Baptism; He that believeth and is baptiz'd, shall be saved.

Secondly, The Danger and fatal End of Infidelity and Unbelief; He that believeth not, shall be damned. For

First, The necessary Conditions assign'd here of Life and Salvation, are Faith and Baptism; He that believeth and is baptiz'd, shall be saved. To believe in general, is to assent to the Truth of a thing upon the Testimony of another; and according to the different kinds of Testimony, there result different kinds of Faith. To believe any thing upon the Testimony of Men, is a human Faith; and by this all the Affairs, Contracts, and Commerce of Mankind are carry'd on and preserv'd. To believe any thing upon the Testimony of God, is a Divine Faith; and upon this all the great Concerns of our Souls, and a future Life are founded. And if we believe the Witness of Men in worldly Affairs, the Witness of God is greater, and far more to be believ'd and rely'd upon in spiritual Matters. And this is the Faith by which we are to believe all the Articles of our Creed; that is, to receive them upon the Testimony of God, who hath reveal'd them to us, and requir'd the Belief of them; and such a Belief too, as rests not in a bare Assent to the Truth of them, but leads to Actions suitable to such a Belief. This is here made necessary to Salvation; for he that thus believeth shall be saved, and without this Faith 'tis impossible to please God, or to be saved by him.

But our Saviour adds another Requisite to Salvation; and that is, to be baptiz'd in this Faith. He that believeth and is baptiz'd, shall be saved. Baptism is the Door of Entrance into the Kingdom of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter. 'Tis that gives us an Admission into Christ's Church and Family, by an open Profession of our Faith, and a solemn Promise of adhering to it. And except we are thus born again of Water and the Holy Ghost, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; John 3. 5. This is the first Proposition of our Text, which shews us the necessary Conditions of Salvation; He that believeth and is baptiz'd, shall be saved.

The *Second* shews us the Danger of Infidelity, or the fatal End of Unbelief; *He that believeth not, shall be damned.* For he that believeth not, calls in question the Truth of God's Word, and so makes him a Lyar; yea, he in effect denies his Being and all his Attributes; for he doubts his Power and Goodness, his Truth and Faithfulness, and so can receive no Benefit by either. But the Unbelief chiefly meant in our Text, is the denying Christ to be the true Messias or Saviour of the World; to shew the Sinfulness whereof, St. John asks the Question, *Who is a Lyar but he that denyeth that Jesus is the Christ: And he is Anti-Christ that denyeth the Father and the Son;* 1 Joh. 2. 22. The Danger whereof he sets forth in the 5th Chapter, ver. 12. *He that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son hath not Life:* where by having the Son, is meant the believing in him, and taking him for our Saviour; and consequently the not having the Son, must be the disbelieving and rejecting of him. And as Life and Salvation is promis'd to the former, so is Death and Damnation threaten'd to the latter; which made St. Peter brand the disbelieving of Christ and his Doctrine with the name of damnable Heresies, *denying the Lord that bought them,* 2 Pet. 2. 1. So that Athanasius's damning Sentence, for which some have damned his Creed, stands, you see, upon good Authority. And his saying, *Whosoever will be saved, must before all things hold the Catholick Faith;* and that *except he keep it whole and undefiled, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly;* is in effect the same with what our Saviour here declares, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

But what is this Catholick Faith, of which these things are spoken? Why! That Athanasius tells in the following Words, saying, *The Catholick Faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, &c.* where he comprises the Catholick Faith under these two Heads, viz. The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity takes up the first and greatest part of this Creed; wherein Athanasius labours to explain the pure and orthodox Doctrine deliver'd by the Fathers, and decreed by Councils about it, against all those Hereticks and Opposers, who sought to corrupt or undermine it.

In general, he tells us, that we are to own and worship a Trinity of Persons, in the Unity of the Substance; according to that of St. John, *There are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one*: 1 John 5. 7. And this is to be done without confounding the Persons, or dividing the Substance.

For the First, There was a certain Heretick, nam'd *Sabellius*, who made such a mixture and confusion among the Persons of the Trinity, as to allow no distinction to be made between them, and drew many Followers after him into this pernicious Heresy. Against these, *Athanasius* here asserts with the Fathers and Councils, That there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost: but the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal: meaning, that tho there is a distinction in the Persons, yet there is none in the Essence; the Glory and Perfections of the Godhead being common and equal to them all. And therefore,

As we may not confound the Persons, so neither may we divide the Substance. This was done by *Arius* and *Eunomius*, and other Hereticks, who would not allow the Godhead equally to belong to all the three Persons. Against these, *Athanasius* here strenuously sets himself, by ascribing all the Attributes and Perfections of the Deity, equally and particularly to each Person; saying, in the next words, *Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost*. And then mentions some of the highest and most incommunicable Properties of the Deity, making them common to all three; as *the Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate*: meaning, that neither of them was made, or had any beginning of time. Again, *The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible*; meaning, that the Divine Nature in each is above our reach or comprehension. *The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal*; that is, they were all from Eternity, and so co-equal together, and co-eternal. And yet, saith he, *They are not three Eternals, but one Eternal*; as also there are not three Incomprehensibles, nor three Uncreated, but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible. This he farther enlarges upon in other Attributes of the Divine Nature; as, *The Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy*  
Ghost



*Ghost Almighty; the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost God; the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord: And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty; nor three Gods, or three Lords, but one God, and one Lord. This he affirms against the Arians and the Tritheists, who, from a plurality of Persons, would infer a plurality of Gods, especially when the Divine Excellencies are ascrib'd to them all: whereas this by no means follows; for the same Perfections may be found in more, who yet agree in one and the same Nature, as the Nature of Man is the same in many Individuals. And tho (as Athanasius tells us) we are compell'd, by the Christian Verity, to acknowledg every Person by himself to be God and Lord; yet are we forbidden, by the Catholick Religion, to say, there be three Gods, or three Lords.*

Having thus, as far as our Faculties will reach, explain'd the Mystery of three Persons, and one God, we are next taught something touching the Order of these three Persons: *The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten, and so is reckon'd the first Person in the blessed Trinity: The Son is of the Father alone, not made, or created, but begotten; that is, he descended from the Father, not by Creation, but by an eternal ineffable Generation, by which he is stil'd, the only begotten Son of the Father, and so is the second Person in the Holy Trinity. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding: meaning, that he came from both, not by way of Creation or Generation, but by an eternal and unaccountable Procession, by which he is the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity.*

Now these distinct manners of Subsistences and Relations, are peculiar to each of the three Persons singly, and may not be spoken of them in the plural, but singular Number: *for there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.*

Moreover, in this Trinity none is afore or after other, in order of Time; none is greater or less than another, in point of Dignity; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worship'd.

These things, tho above the comprehension of human Reason, are to be receiv'd upon the Credit of Divine Revelation;

velation; and he that will be sav'd, must thus think and believe of the Trinity: which is the first part of this Creed.

The second relates to the Incarnation of the Son of God, whereby the Word (which is a name often given to our Saviour) was made Flesh, and dwelt among us; as St. John tells us, chap. 1. 14.

And this begins with these words, *Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting Salvation, that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And that we may not err in a matter of so great importance, the Creed proceeds to instruct us in the right Faith and Truth in this matter; and that is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man: both which are plainly held forth, and declar'd to us in Holy Scripture, and are to be believ'd by us against Arius, who deny'd him to be God, save only titularly, as Magistrates are call'd Gods; and against Valentinus, who deny'd him to be Man, and that he was only a Spectrum, or Apparition, in human Shape.

Against the first, we are here taught to believe, that he is God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the World, having the Godhead deriv'd to him by an eternal Communication from the Father; by which he is (as the Nicene Creed declares) God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, being of one Substance with the Father: which things were defin'd by that Council, against the Heresies of Arius, Samosatenus, and Photinus, who affirm'd the contrary.

Again, as he was God of the Substance of his Father, so was he Man too of the Substance of his Mother, born in the World. This is to be believ'd against Apollinaris, and other Hereticks, who would not allow that Christ receiv'd any thing of the Substance of the Virgin Mary, but only pass'd thro her Body, as Water does thro a Pipe; contrary to the express words of the Apostle, who tells us, that as Children are Partakers of Flesh, he likewise took part of the same, Heb. 2. 14. for which reasons he is said to be perfect God and perfect Man, having both Natures, in the highest Perfection, conjoin'd and united in him: For the Divine Nature, all the Fulness of the Godhead is said to dwell in him bodily, Col. 2. 9. and for the Human Nature, he is said to be of a reasonable Soul, and human Flesh subsisting, and in all things (Sin only excepted) to be made like unto

us: so that he is equal with the Father, as touching his Godhead; for being in the form of God, he thought it no Robbery to be equal with God, saith St. Paul, Phil. 2. 6. but yet inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood, in respect of which he acknowledges his Father to be greater than He, John 14. 28. But altho he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ. This is to be believ'd against Nestorius and other Hereticks, who, from the two Natures of Christ, multiply'd his Personality, and made not one, but two Christs; the contrary whereof is here asserted in this Creed of *Athanasius*, which is confirm'd by the Testimony of St. Paul, *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus*; 1 Tim. 2. 5. The manner whereof is explain'd in the next words: *One, not by Conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, or Confusion of Substance, as Eutiches affirm'd, but by taking the Manhood into God, and thereby preserving the Unity of Person: for as the reasonable Soul and Flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ.* Thus did *Athanasius* assert and vindicate the Catholick Faith, against all the Hereticks of his time; and the Christian Church hath still order'd it to be read, to preserve the sound and orthodox Doctrine in these Articles.

For the following Articles, of Christ's suffering for our Salvation, his descending into Hell, and rising again the third Day from the Dead; his ascending into Heaven, and sitting at the right Hand of the Father Almighty, and his coming from thence to judg the Quick and the Dead: These being all before explain'd in the Apostles Creed, I shall not need to repeat, but refer to it. And therefore shall conclude with *Athanasius*, to expect and prepare for his second Coming, when all Men shall rise again with their Bodies, and shall give account for their own good Works; and they that have done good, shall go into Life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting Fire. This is the Catholick Faith (saith he) which except a Man believe faithfully, he cannot be sav'd. And our Saviour, to the same purpose, *He that thus believeth, and is baptiz'd, shall be sav'd; but he that believeth not, shall be damn'd.*

And now let us, as often as the Church appoints it, rehearse this Creed of *Athanasius* with Reverence and Devotion, which contains in it so many sound and excellent Truths:



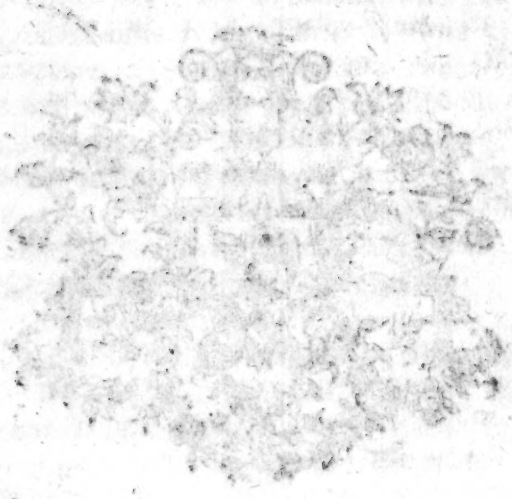
Truths: And let us, with the holy Author of it, stand firm in the Belief of it, against all sorts of Enemies and Opposers: Let us not be carry'd away with the Torrent of Error or Vice, nor let either the Hereticks of old, or the Socinians, Sensualists, and Libertines of our times shake or corrupt our Faith herein; but let us bless God for preserving these holy Mysteries, and handing them down pure and uncorrupt to us. In a word, let us keep them whole and undefil'd, and continue stedfast and immovable in the Belief of them; so shall we receive the end of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls.

*The End of the First Volume.*



upon the Creed of St. Athanasius

Trinitie: And let us with the holy Angell of the Lord  
firm in the Belief of it, against all sort of Heresies and  
Opposites: Let us not be carried away with the Temptation of  
Hypocrites, nor let either the Privileges of our Office, or the  
Societies, Academies, and Universities of our times, be an  
obstacle to our Faith herein: but let us thank God for his  
reviving these holy Mysteries, and binding them upon us  
and our posterity to come, for we keep them whole  
and unadulterated, and without any addition or  
diminution: so that we may be able to give an account  
of them to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, at  
the Day of our Judgment.



A N

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